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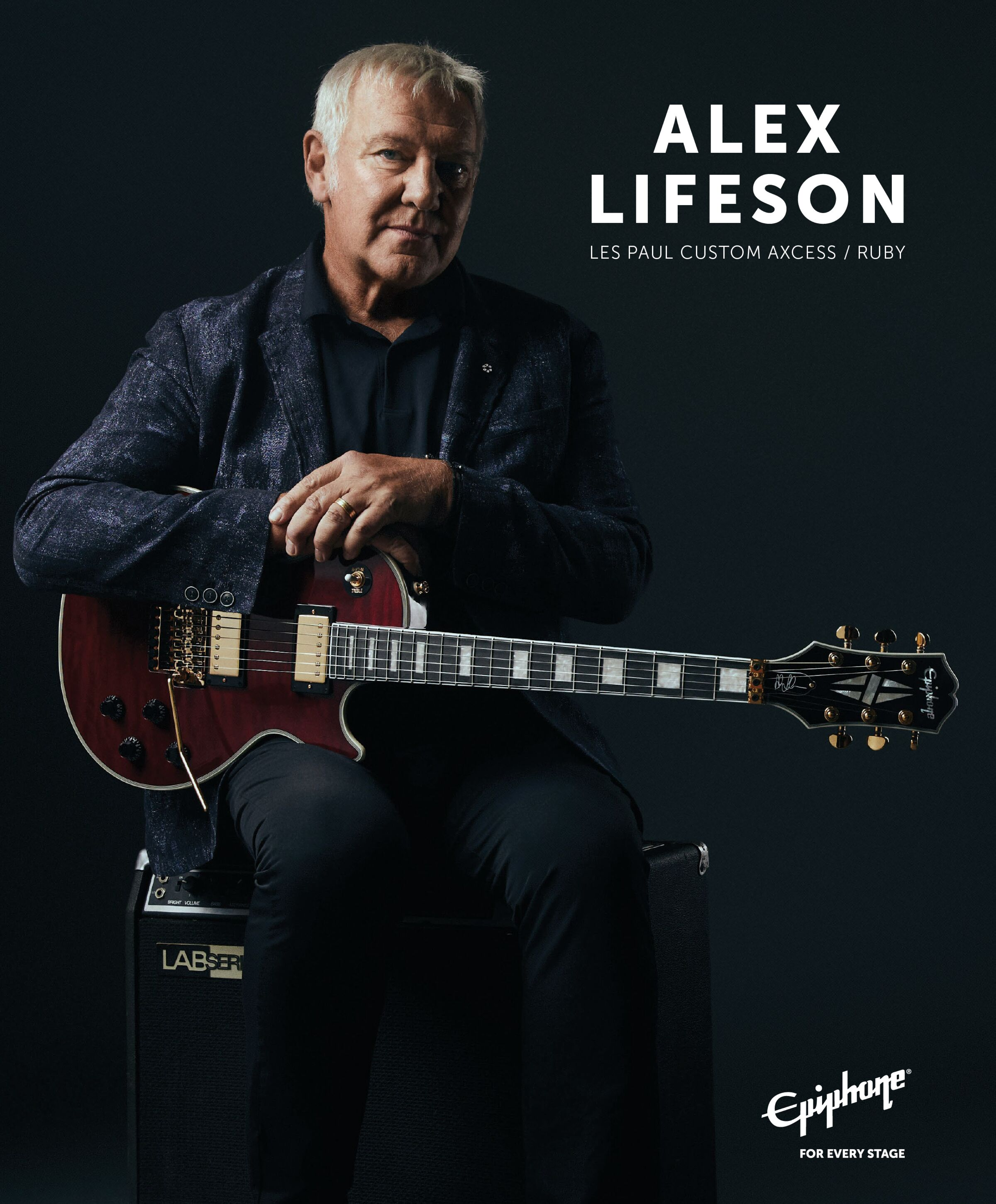
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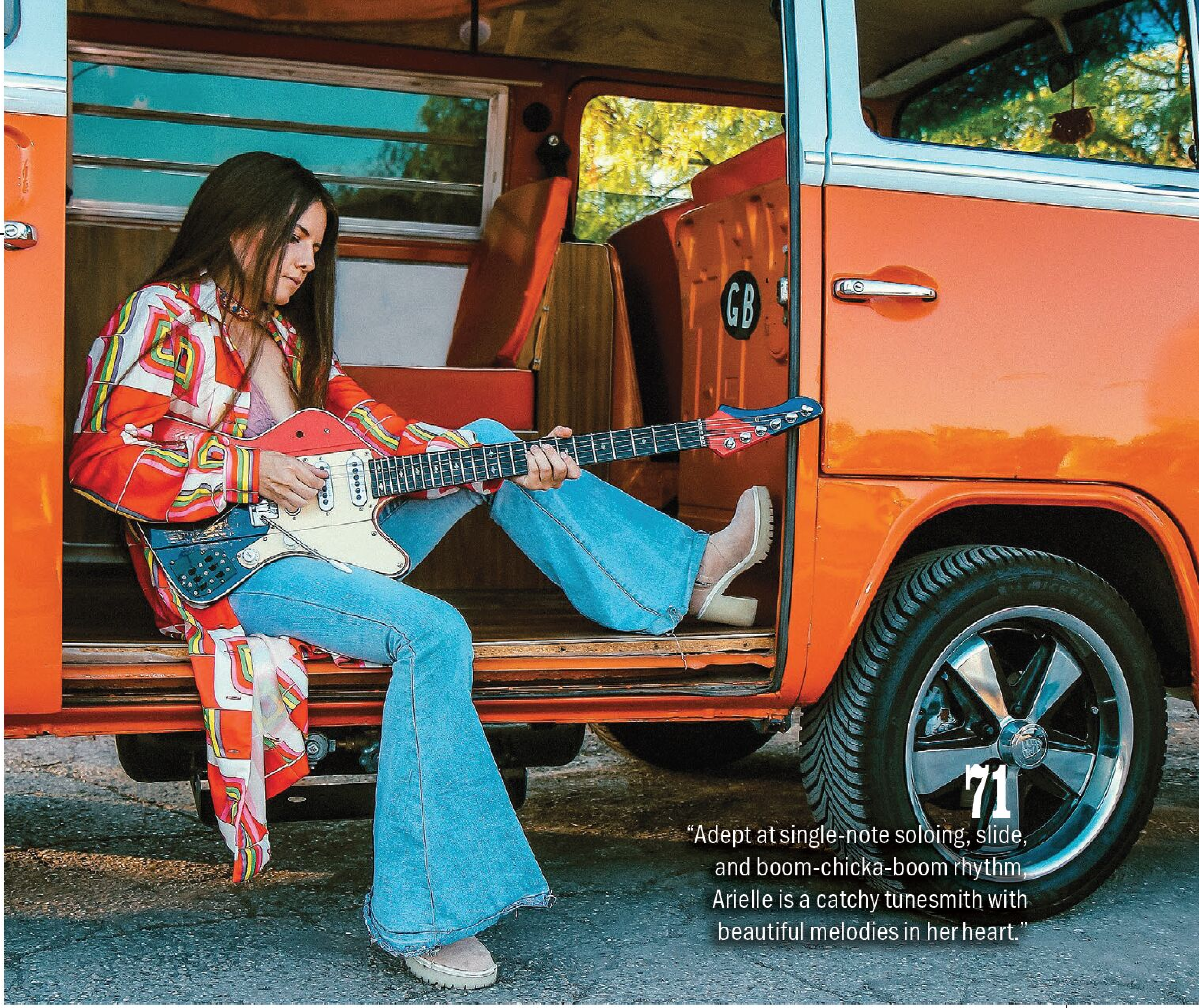

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Gov't Mule's new album, *Peace… Like A River*, may be a remnant of the pandemic, but it's also the band's most-ambitious, highlighting world-class musicians in true fighting shape with strong songs, stellar playing, and a few special guests. | ***By Oscar Jordan***

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SLIDE WORSHIP

I thoroughly enjoyed Oscar Jordan's masterful exploration of slide guitar ("Time, Touch, and Reverence: The Magical Philosophy Of Slide," July '23). He shared rich detail and supported it skillfully with quotes from a sample of the top artists in the discipline.

Within that sample, I suggest Megan Lovell is an outlier because she plays lap steel. The renaissance of this instrument as a rock/blues axe reminds us of artists like Junior Brown and the recently departed masters David Lindley and Freddie Roulette.

Lap steel brings its own slant to some of the attributes Jordan discusses. It employs the solid-metal steel, which (echoing Sonny Landreth's observations) range from the massive cylinders used by pedal-steel players to the lighter, shaped dobro bars like the Stevens. Also, lap steels do not use standard tuning. While open major chords are common, the opportunity exists to add chromatic steps (my favorite is the sixth). Full points for a fabulous piece.

David G. Ebersole
Alden, New York

I loved the feature on slide. Some of the tips were just perfect for getting into the feel, but it would've been nice to mention Billy Gibbons and his "rip your face off" tone on "Tush." Keep it comin'!

Jeff Dagenhardt
West Allis, Wisconsin

Learning guitar, I was taught to grab that neck and press down hard to fret the strings. I've always wanted to play slide and it looked so easy, but I got frustrated because slide is the opposite; it takes so much finesse – with both hands. I was glad to read that pros had the same problems starting out. It's a whole new animal. I finally got to the point to where I enjoy it – after a lot of practice and patience. Thanks for the great article.

Patrick Wilberding
Lake Havasu City, Arizona

VG: EAGLE-SCOUT READING

Hi, *Vintage Guitar*. I'm a Scout working on my Communications Merit Badge, and one requirement is to share an opinion with a magazine.

I'm a guitarist and I love your magazine, especially "Fretprints" and its tabs in each issue. They are very helpful. My dad, Steve, has been a subscriber for as long as you've been around, and I like to read his copies.

Eliana Baardson
Woodstock,
Georgia

(*Ed. Note: Thank you very much, Eliana! We're happy to hear you've picked up the guitar and that you and your father enjoy the magazine. We also appreciate your taking the time to write, and congrats on choosing to pursue the Communication Merit Badge.*)

Joan Erlewine captured her husband, Dan (left), completing the deal with Jim Simpson for the S.S. Maxwell project guitar.

REGARD FOR RUSTY

Rusty Russell ("In Memoriam," July '23) was a friend of mine for 42 years. We were at Wichita State University together and played many gigs back in the day. I loved that cat and hated that he passed. Thank you for running his memoriam. He was an amazing, talented, wonderful human being.

Glenn Alexander
Scotch Plains, New Jersey

(*Ed. Note: Thank you, Glenn. While there aren't enough superlatives to describe Rusty and his work for* VG, *yours are a nice start.*)

LUTHIER LAUDATION

For as long as I can remember, I've been a fan and follower of Dan Erlewine and look forward to each issue of *Vintage Guitar* to see the projects he outlines. As an amateur luthier, I have learned much from him.

I had the great surprise and pleasure of meeting Dan at this summer's Columbus Guitar Show, in Hilliard, Ohio, and I even bought a project guitar from him – an S.S. Maxwell from the '20s or '30s, I would guess, distributed by the company that sold Maxwell House coffee.

I plan to re-set the neck, and parts of the back were loose, so I'll remove it and add x-bracing while I'm at it. Hopefully, when I'm done it'll be good to the last drop!

Jim Simpson
Wheeling, West Virginia

FEWER FOGEY DUDES, PLEASE!

I love receiving my old-fashioned printed copy of *VG* every month. As a bald, 60-something white guy who grew up listening to classic rock on the radio, I find the print medium comforting, civilized, and more easily navigated by my aging brain. But, just because I'm an old fart who struggles with technology doesn't mean I don't enjoy new music and new artists – especially those who push guitar into new places or mess with the patriarchy.

My wife and I saw The Surfrajettes in June and I told Shermy Freeman and Nicole Damoff that I love what they're doing and I'm more than happy to move over and give them room. The same goes for Shana Cleveland and her band, La Luz, the incredible Nova Twins, and The Courettes.

I realize it's called *Vintage Guitar* for a reason, but Joe Bonamassa isn't vintage and neither is the new Guild Surfliner, and they get plenty of press! How about some feature-length articles on some of these remarkable women and the cool music they are making?

Jay McKillop
Cincinnati, Ohio

(*Ed. Note: Thanks for reading, Jay. In case you missed it, we interviewed Nicole and Shermy from the Surfrajettes in the July '22 issue, and will continue to follow them. We appreciate the tip on other acts to investigate.*)

SEND LETTERS TO

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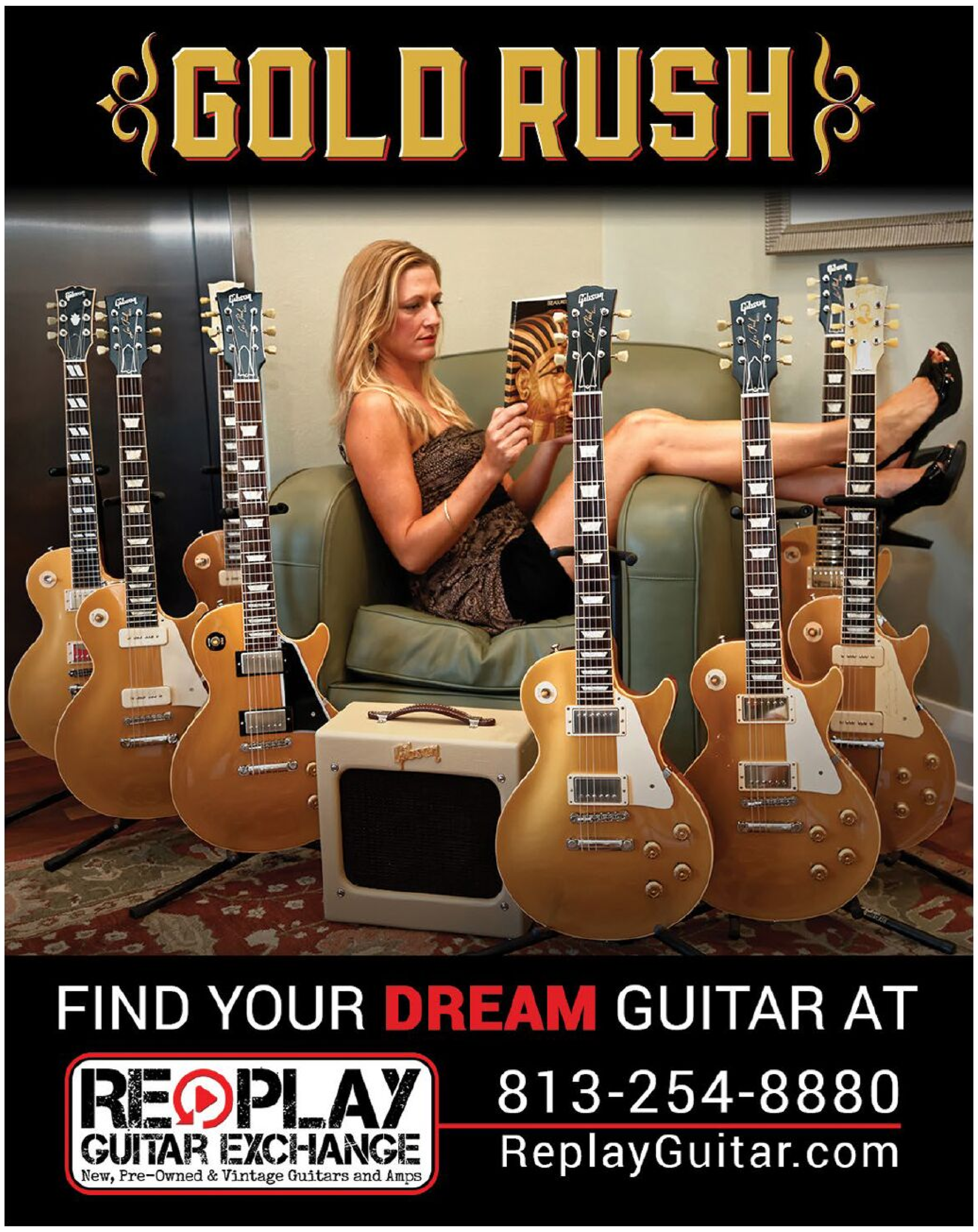


FIRST FRET

Dwight Yoakam and Tommy Prine at "You Got Gold" in 2022.

PRINE FOUNDATION SLATES "YOU GOT GOLD"

The second annual "You Got Gold: Celebrating the Songs of John Prine" charity event happens in Nashville October 8-10 at the Country Music Hall of Fame CMA Theater, Basement East, and Ryman Auditorium. The event benefits the Prine family's Hello in There Foundation and features performances by artists celebrating Prine's career and the fan community built through his career of 50-plus years.

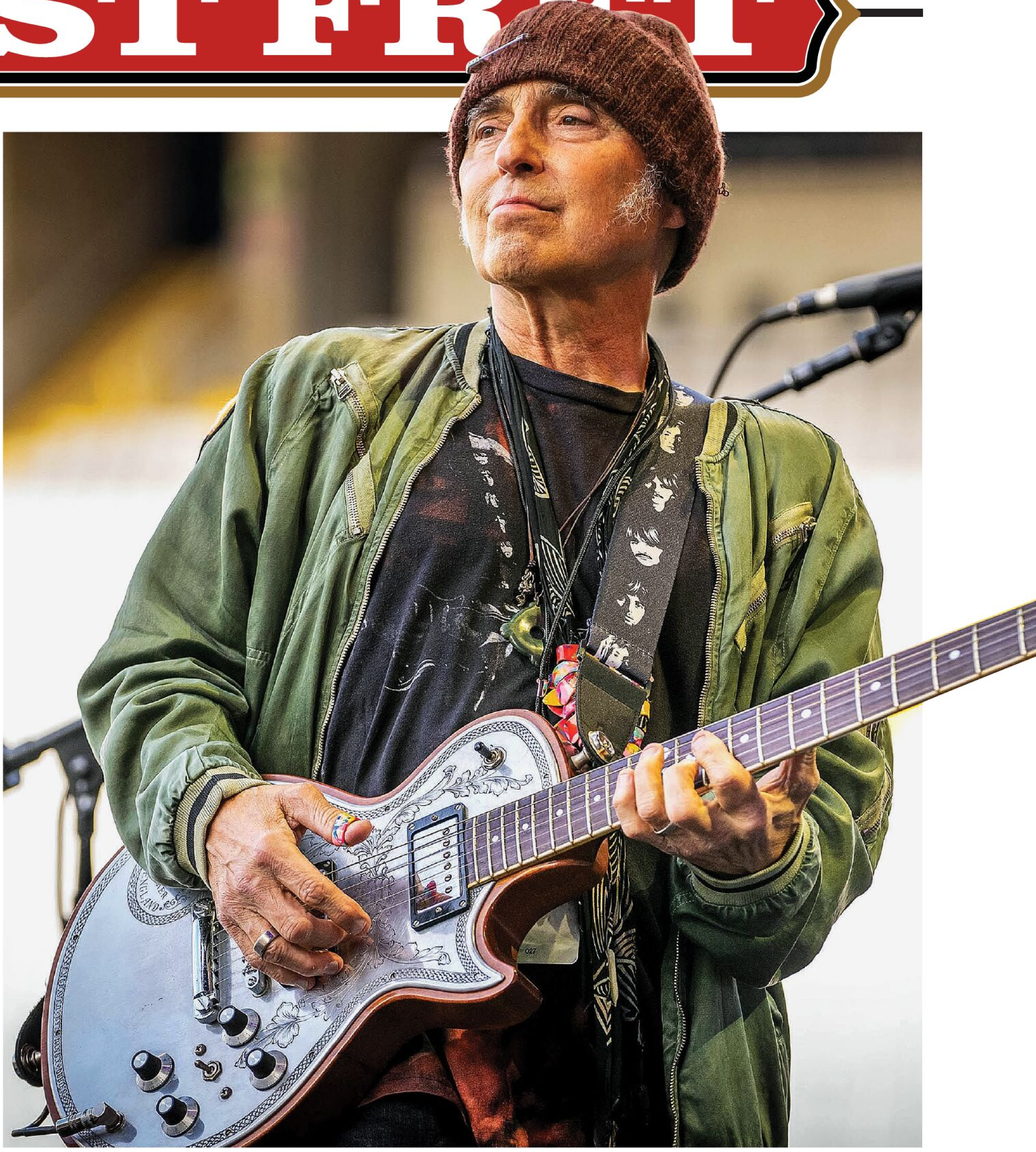
The foundation identifies and collaborates with people who are marginalized, discriminated against, or otherwise forgotten. Last year's event raised nearly $500,000 for the Tennessee Immigrant and Refugee Rights Coalition, Porter's Call, Renewal House, and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. For more, visit yougotgold.johnprine.com.

LES PAUL FOUNDATION HONORS MARY FORD

The Les Paul Foundation honored Mary Ford with an updated web page celebrating her life and accomplishments. It includes videos of Ford performing with Les Paul, photos from her personal and professional life, along with biographical and other information. See it at www.les-paul.com/about-mary-ford-2/.

COUNTRY FOR A CAUSE RAISES $60,000

Country For A Cause, the annual fundraiser for the Monroe Carell, Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, happened June 7 at Nashville's 3rd & Lindsley. Hosted by Kelly Lang and country legend T.G. Sheppard, it included an eclectic group of performers who helped raise $60,000 for the non-profit facility, which treats a range of pediatric health issues.



NILS LOFGREN

The Secret Weapon

Guitar wizard Nils Lofgren has been an in-demand sideman for more than 50 years, working with Bruce Springsteen & the E Street Band, Neil Young & Crazy Horse, and solo work along with appearances with everyone from Roy Buchanan to Ringo Starr. Lofgren recently released *Mountains*, a powerful solo set with strong songs and his trademark uncanny guitar work.

"Only Ticket Out" and "Won't Cry No More" have fierce blues guitar. When you play blues, are there any players you're channeling?

Blues masters that still inform my playing – Jimi Hendrix, Jeff Beck, Roy Buchanan, Albert King, B.B. King, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Keith Richards, George Harrison, and Eric Clapton. Though there are many other great guitarists, those are the most influential through my transformation from classical accordionist to blues rocker. I'm still learning.

What was in your rig on "I Remember Her Name"?

The main part is a Gretsch Black Falcon through my Fuchs combo. I'm fingerpicking

Yoakam, Prine: Emma Delevante. Nils Lofgren: Rob DeMartin.

a percussive, muted rhythm with a melodic theme, using some delay with a hint of reverse reverb. The lead part is my '61 Strat. Again, with subtle delay and reverse 'verb through the amp; my longtime friend – and great engineer – Jamie Weddle, helped get whatever sounds I was looking for. I was also honored to have my old friend David Crosby grace the song with his magnificent voice. I miss him.

You often add artificial harmonics to your solos, which is rare in a rock context. It's your signature.

I fell in love with harmonics through Roy Buchanan, who made them sing like bells. When I was young, Roy was another local Washington, D.C., guitarist; we got to be friends and played together occasionally. In the '60s, I'd go to the Crossroads, a country bar in Bladensburg, Maryland, to hear Roy play in Danny Denver's band. I had a Beatles haircut the patrons didn't like, and Roy had to warn them to leave me be as I was his friend. Between sets, we'd sit in a tiny, funky dressing room and Roy would show me how he made those harmonics with his thumb and flat pick. It seemed impossible, but loving that bell-like sound, I learned how to get them to sound with the thumbpick, using my first finger to brush the octave of the string.

Which other guitars, amps, and pedals did you employ on the album?

I grabbed a Strat, Falcon, Zemaitis, a hybrid Tele/Mustang one-off, PRS, Hagstrom electric 12-string, Kay electric, Fender Jazz bass, Takamine acoustic, Martin D-18 and D-35, Gibson J-50, dulcimer, and an Ogden lever harp. I ran most guitars through the Fuchs combo, sometimes with a Bassman for stereo imaging. Pedals included a TC Electronic Nova Delay for reverse reverb, Electro-Harmonix Micro Pog, Strymon Brigadier delay, and a Barber Burn Unit for overdrive.

How did you decide to become a professional musician?

One night in D.C., I saw Herman's Hermits, The Blues Magoos, and the Who at Constitution Hall. It was an amazing show. Then, my friends and I ran over to the Ambassador Theater to see the Jimi Hendrix Experience. It was a mind-blowing night, plus Pete Townsend was in the audience! Jimi's set was life-altering; I left there knowing I had to try to be a professional rock musician – an idea that had never occurred to me until that night.

You met Jimi when you were 19.

Grin was touring as an opening act after our first album came out in 1970, and were blessed to open three California shows for the Jimi Hendrix Experience. Awesome! The gig in Ventura was on my 19th birthday. As a birthday gift to myself, my mentor, producer David Briggs, convinced me to knock on Jimi's Winnebago door. Jimi answered and I got to thank him for being the inspiration behind me turning pro, and how honored we were to open for him. Jimi was smiling and easygoing. He looked in my eyes, shook my hand, and acknowledged my extreme gratitude. It's still one of the highlights of my musical life. There are more cool stories in the "Rockality" video series on my website.

When you gig with Springsteen, what's it like to play for 20,000 people?

Big shows or clubs, whether I'm the band leader or in a band, I'm always thrilled and inspired to walk out in front of people expecting a great musical experience. The bigger shows with Bruce and the E Street Band, Neil Young & Crazy Horse, or Ringo's All-Starrs always feels like I'm playing a Super Bowl for a hometown crowd, and we're guaranteed a win! I have massive gratitude as I'm using a gift bestowed on me by my beautiful parents and a higher power I believe in, one that has nothing to do with any organized religions. – ***Pete Prown***

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JOHN PIZZARELLI

From Stage to Seven-String

The John Pizzarelli Trio is back on the road supporting its latest album, *Stage and Screen*. Joined by Isaiah J. Thompson on piano and Michael Karn on double bass, Pizzarelli is flying through tunes mostly associated with Broadway and the movies. We had the chance to dig in a bit with the jazz master.

What were you hoping to achieve with this collection of songs?

We had just come out of a Nat Cole record, so we tried to pick a couple of tunes that were outside of what we'd been doing – just sort of blow on some tunes. We started to play "Tea For Two" as a ballad because I'd heard it on "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" during the pandemic, where Blossom Dearie sang it over one of the scenes. I thought, "I've got to try that!"

For my Thursday night shows on Facebook, I was doing "I Love Betsy" and "Time After Time," and as I was heading into the studio I remembered that I'd always wanted to put together a suite of *Oklahoma!* songs. So, I wrote that down and said, "Hey guys, we're doing a suite."(laughs) When I looked at how I'd put a nice bow around it, I realized they were all popular Broadway songs or popular movie songs. I rounded it out with a few other things I hadn't recorded, and I knew it would be a nice theme out on the road.

I was really pleased that the three of us made a record that represents what we do on the road, and we got it captured so early in our game together.

It's a nice mix of well-known songs and some that are lesser-known, but the arrangements all sound fresh, even on the older songs.

It's nice to have things people aren't familiar with and they were all also in our wheelhouse, so it all works out well. I probably could've found a few more lesser-known songs, but that's where I was at the time.

Are you doing more soloing on this record?

Yes, and I think it's because it's the first non-Nat King Cole kind of record in a while and it was nice to play tunes I hadn't played before. It's kind of just because of the way it fell into my lap. I'm glad people are noticing that. It was recorded well and I had a chance to play a little more.

Even though you and your dad, Bucky, are both great rhythm players, you're also killer soloists.

Well, my single-note playing is a work in progress. It's taken 40 years to get to this point, so it's nice to be recognized for that (laughs). I'm happy with the way it came out on this record. Sometimes it works.

What was your primary guitar on the record?

I used the Moll I've had for about 15 years, with a Florentine cutaway and floating Kent Armstrong pickup. It's a gorgeous little box. It's been through the mill but it records so well, especially for rhythm playing.

Which amp did you use?

I recorded through a ZT Club. It's got a 12" speaker and it's such a good little amplifier. Not too many highs and not too many lows. It's really good in the studio. [Engineer] Bill Moss has this microphone that he can put right in the middle of where my guitar is so he can pick up the acoustic part and mix acoustic rhythm a little more to give more of an electric sound for soloing. I was particularly pleased with the rhythm sound on this – a little more acoustic, which was nice.

It also sounds great on the chord solos you played.

Thank you! I'm really pleased with that!

On another subject, during the pandemic you did a solo record of Pat Metheny songs. Any plans to do more like that?

This is the first time I'm saying it out loud, but I *am* thinking about going into a studio with a list of instrumentals. But the hard thing is Bucky recorded most of them, so I've got to listen to his version and think I'm going to play something better. So, it's about trying to find the songs.

You know the Joe Pass story where he was playing – I think it was before an Oscar Peterson show – and said to himself, "How hard can it be to play a half hour of tunes? I played two songs and it was five after." Well, with a guitar album, if I could get to 40 minutes, that would be amazing.

So I *have* thought about it. It's just a matter of getting into the studio and making it happen. ***– John Heidt***

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MONSTER MIKE WELCH

From Phenom To Blues Veteran

Twenty-seven years after his debut album at age 17, Monster Mike Welch delivers perhaps his best disc yet with *Nothing But Time*. Co-produced with multi-instrumentalist Kid Andersen, it features bass legend Jerry Jemmott, who worked with Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, and countless others.

A commanding guitarist and music scholar, Welch flirts with heroes from Magic Sam to George Harrison, in the grooves as well as in conversation.

Having gotten recognition at such a young age, did you go through any identity crises?

When I was 21, I wasn't happy doing what I was doing, so I took some time off. I did two semesters at Berklee College of Music – a great experience, having had years as a professional musician. People go to music school not knowing who they want to be. For me, I knew what gaps I had in my education. But in my second semester, David Maxwell asked if I wanted to do some dates with James Cotton, and Mudcat Ward asked if I wanted to join Sugar Ray and the Bluetones. Being a sideman allowed me to make music for the sake of making music. I think it would've been a much more difficult transition if I'd continued the same path I'd been on as a teenager. That's when I started coming into my own.

Speaking of Cotton, there's an argument to be made for Luther Tucker being the perfect hole-in-one blues guitar player when you consider everything he did and the fact it all came out sounding like him. From playing on the Little Walter records in the '50s to being able to totally kill it when Cotton played soul tunes, there's so much there.

In terms of influences, are there any that would surprise people?

Richard Thompson is one. I didn't hear him until I'd been playing guitar almost 20 years, but the sheer freedom, dancing on the edge, and the fearlessness of bending strings and breaking beyond the confines of the fretted note.

I didn't play slide guitar on this record. Anything that sounds like slide is bent. In "If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day," there's stuff that sounds like slide, and some of that is definitely inspired by Richard Thompson. He's using it to sound like a cross between bagpipes and pedal steel; I'm using it to sound like slide guitar or the human voice.

What's your technique while doing that?

The simple version is approach each note from a half-step below, pre-bend it, and that allows you to get the vibrato going flat and sharp. If you're just adding vibrato to a stationary note, you're only going sharp. With slide guitar, there's a much greater range going up and down from the note. Because I'm approximating blues slide, it's a little more forgiving. When Muddy Waters played slide, his intonation was perfect but not correct (laughs). When country players mimic pedal steel with mechanically precise bends, every note has to be in tune. I'm looking for something rawer.

What gear did you use on the album?

Mostly, I played the blue Japanese Strat I've had since my teens, with Lindy Fralin pickups and a USA Custom neck. I bought it new in 1992. I ended up using Kid's amps, mostly an original tweed Bassman. On "I Ain't Sayin'" and "Losing Every Battle," it's a Vox AC30.

"I Ain't Saying" sounds like early B.B. King.

I didn't even realize I was doing it at the time, but he's so important to me. My vibrato is always wider and looser; Otis Rush is a clear example of that. When I was very young and heard Clapton and Hendrix and Mick Taylor with the Stones, I always tried to get this wide vocal-like vibrato that wasn't really the way they played. When I later heard Otis, it was like, "That's the sound I've been trying to make." Ronnie Earl is someone who put all of that stuff together, but you can tell it's him from the first note.

As a kid, there were one or two Clapton interviews that defined my musical taste for a long time, because that was the first time I heard about Freddie King and Little Walter, or *Ray Charles Live At Newport*. But *Blues Breakers* Clapton had a very specific melodic sense that was different from any of his influences. In "Little Girl," that ascending line is gorgeous, and it's not something Freddie King would've ever played.

What made you decide to do "I Me Mine"?

The Beatles records were the first things that got me interested in music, and that's still some of my favorite music. "I Me Mine" is basically a minor-blues ballad that turns into a blues shuffle, and I looked to see if this was something that a bunch of blues people have covered. I heard it almost as an Otis Rush thing. There was something freeing about it, because I'm going to do songs I like, and blues is how I express myself. ***– Dan Forte***

Monster Mike Welch: J.O. Welch.

Duane Betts: Dylan Jon Wade Cox.

DUANE BETTS

Father to Son

It's understandable if you detect a certain Southern-rock flare in the music of singer/guitarist Duane Betts. After all, his father is longtime Allman Brothers guitarist Dickey Betts and he shares a name with the legendary Duane Allman.

On his first solo album, *Wild & Precious Life*, the 45-year-old pays tribute to his musical roots while also putting a very personal touch on the music. Betts (who is also a member of the Allman Betts Band with Devon Allman and Berry Oakley, Jr.) spoke with *Vintage Guitar* about his solo debut, gear, and guitarists he admires.

What made you decide to release your first-ever solo album now?

I think a lot of it had to do with the fact that I became a singer later. I was always a guitar player and wrote songs in bands, but I never really took on a lot of the lead-singing responsibility. As I started singing more and writing more, it was a natural progression to get it out.

How does *Wild & Precious Life* differ from a Allman Betts Band release?

With Allman Betts Band, you still have my stamp on it, but this is a more-pure version of me, my personality, my story, and where I'm at in life. The instrumentation is pretty much the same and the style isn't drastically different. But my personality is stamped hard on this.

What was your guitar setup for the recording?

I mainly used my Les Paul – the Dickey Betts signature prototype #1, and I played through a '65 Deluxe Reverb I got from Derek Trucks. There's a '61 335 on a few songs, and that was pretty much it.

For effects, I used a Dan Drive Secret Engine fuzz that J.D. Simo gave me, on "Cold Dark World."

The acoustic I used was a late-'40s Martin D-28. It's my dad's guitar and it's one of my favorites.

Johnny Stachela joined you on the album, playing a few vintage instruments along with his Custom Shop '61 SG through a mid-'60s Vibrolux Reverb...

Johnny was a *huge* part – the other half of the guitar work is him.

Which songs are you most proud of, guitar-wise?

I really like the solo in "Under the Bali Moon." There's a lot of pain and angst in it. I'm also really proud of some of the acoustic tracks, like "Waiting on a Song"; I really enjoyed the live jam – just us playing in the room, with no overdubs.

I also like "Circles in the Stars," which doesn't have any guitar solo at all. There's a little melody that leads out before it breaks down for the final acoustic verse. It's just a simple "lullaby melody" I play on guitar. Sometimes those really simple, beautiful melodies are the things I'm most proud of, rather than a ripping guitar solo. Almost like a child could hum them. That's really rewarding.

Did your father ever give you pointers about playing guitar?

That you can learn lot just from listening and watching people play. I've been onstage watching him play, playing in bands with him, and watching Warren [Haynes] play – and listening to Warren. They rubbed off on me quite a bit.

My dad, I'd say, is my favorite player. But when I was learning, it was just listen, listen, listen to records constantly, training my ear. I didn't want to have too much interference with people coming in and telling me what to do. I liked to isolate and listen to music and learn stuff by myself. But then my dad would come in and give me really valuable insight – like, how to play Chuck Berry and showing the right way to play 12-bar blues. A lot of that you pick up by watching and listening. But the elementary building-block stuff, he showed me.

Who are your favorite modern guitarists?

Derek Trucks is at the top of the list. Eric Krasno is a good friend and somebody I love. Luther Dickinson – I *love* his playing. I like a lot of people who are in "the rock"– I like what Jack White does, I like Nick Zinner from the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

I also like more-experimental people who aren't necessarily "bluesy" – Johnny Marr from the Smiths; J.D. Simo and Blake Mills are two of my favorite younger guitarists. Also, I love Jonny Greenwood from Radiohead. There's a lot of different stuff to pull from. – ***Greg Prato***

DAN WILSON

Akron's Finest

On *Things Eternal*, jazz-guitar wizard Dan Wilson fuses post-bop, spirituality, and the songs of Stevie Wonder into a satisfying musical journey. The album is a celebration of those who have passed on, but don't get it twisted; Wilson understands that what they left behind is the greatest gift of all, and he honors them with impeccable musicality, phrasing, and inspired compositions.

What was the concept on *Things Eternal*?

I'm reaching a point where at the age of 40, I'm losing the people who raised me. Older family members were passing away, which was a major shock to my system. I started to appreciate what they did for me during my formative years. I was thinking about this hymn called "Hold To God's Unchanging Hand," and I took the main line from that: "Build your hopes on things eternal." That was the idea behind the album.

That ties into the voicemail messages heard on the album.

I had an uncle who passed away in 1991, and I started forgetting what his voice sounded like. So, I started saving messages from my grandmother, my uncles, Joey DeFrancesco, Monty Alexander, and Christian McBride. Those voicemails are such a large part of their personalities, and I want to remember those personalities.

Joey DeFrancesco was quite a character.

He was a huge ballbuster (laughs). He was pretty unforgettable, and I wanted to celebrate that – my grandmother, as well. She was very caring and supportive. She was one of a kind.

You honor people who have passed on, but *Things Eternal* isn't a sad record. It's quite joyful.

That was important. When you lose people, you experience crippling grief, but that's not where it stops. It's just a step in dealing with these life changes. You realize the things those people left behind outlive their physical lives. You start to appreciate them even more.

"Sticology" really sets the tone for the record.

That's a well-known tune on the Cleveland/Akron scene, written by Phillip K. Jones II. I told him how much I appreciated that tune and the way he put it together. He was 17 years old when he wrote it, and said it took him six months to write, piece by piece. I think he knocked it out of the park. It captures the sound of the area. Cleveland is a huge smooth jazz and funk town, but there are other elements that come together in a natural way.

Which guitar are you playing now?

The Benedetto Pat Martino signature, and I *love* that guitar. Joey DeFrancesco convinced Howard Paul at Benedetto to give me an endorsement deal. It's easy for those hollowbody models to feed back, so I chose the Martino because it's a solidbody. It's very versatile and I like the way the neck feels. Plus, it travels well.

How about amps?

Fender Deluxe. That's the one for me. I plug straight in. I'm not saying I'll never use pedals, but I have no use for them right now. I love the guitar for its percussive properties, and I don't want anything to get in the way. I was a drummer first, so I want to hear the percussive attack of the instrument.

As co-producer, how did Christian McBride inform the album?

I was on a gig with him in Las Vegas, and we talked about our favorite movies. We found out we have a lot of the same tastes. I mentioned how much I love the 1989 film *Lean On Me*, with Morgan Freeman. Christian knows the entire script (laughs)! I thought I was the only person in the world who knew that! Since then, it's been a five-year text thread where we send quotes from the movie (laughs). He's been instrumental in my musical development. He's been a constant positive force. Seeing his artistry up close is one thing, but hanging out with him offstage has been inspiring.

Did both of you get into the weeds with the arrangements and performances?

I have relative autonomy when it comes to things like arrangements. He will give suggestions if he hears something he feels should be there. He did that on the record before this. He'll say, "How about if you try this? Flip it and put the bass note here." They're little suggestions, but I take them very seriously because of his musical knowledge.

I didn't feel the need to make this album so guitar-centric – I didn't need to turn on the burners so much. I focused on the quality of the songs, arrangements, and writing. I'm just there to be in service of the music, but I'll never stop be-boppin' (laughs). – ***Oscar Jordan***

Dan Wilson: Shane Wynn.

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Photo courtesy of Steve Turner.

STEVE TURNER

The March To Fuzz

Thirty-five years after Steve Turner and Mudhoney became forever linked with two legendary pedals by coining their debut EP *Superfuzz Big Muff*, Turner has authored an autobiography, *Mud Ride*, and Mudhoney is touring its 11th studio LP, *Plastic Eternity*. He stopped for a bit to talk.

You and Mudhoney's Mark Arm were dismissive of the "grunge" label, but in your book, you seem to be saying, "I was there, too. We were very influential in what happened in the late '80s and early '90s."

As far as grunge goes, in 1995 I was like, "If we're not grunge, no one is." Mark and I always used "grungey" to describe our guitar sounds. I think we get plenty of credit. In the early days, I always said we were just gonna be a footnote to the whole thing, but I think we're more than that (laughs).

You were one of the first of many notable players in the late '80s and early '90s to embrace offset Fender guitars. Was it because they were abundant and cheap?

That was a big part of it. My first good guitar was the Mustang. They just looked so cool. Tom Price, who was in [Seattle band] the U-Men at the time, played a red one. One of the coolest bands in town. I paid $200 for my baby blue one in '84.

Are you're playing a Gold Foil Jazzmaster?

On the new record, there's a couple songs where I needed a vibrato. I was like, "Man, that looks like the coolest guitar ever." It looks like a '60s Silvertone – a really nice version of a cheap '60s guitar.

How did you land on the Guild Starfire IV?

Starfires have been my main guitars since '01, '02. Jeff Ament from Pearl Jam had a 330 and I just loved it, and semi-hollow Guilds were half the price (laughs). I bought one thinking it wasn't gonna be used with Mudhoney, but I took it to practice almost as a joke. I thought it would feedback too much with the Big Muff. But I figured out how to control the feedback, so I bought a second one because I break strings often live.

You had a chance to "inherit" one of Kurt Cobain's prototype Jag-Stangs from Courtney Love, and you passed.

Yeah, that was a mistake (laughs). Instead, I grabbed a weird, sparkly Hagstrom that was kind of in a state of disrepair. I told Courtney, "These are too valuable. You're gonna want these." But, yeah, some '60s Hagstroms seemed fine (laughs).

You'll forever be associated with the Big Muff. Was that a happy accident, or something you were looking for?

I found it in probably '84, when I was figuring out what was what. I already had a Super Fuzz, and in '84 you could buy old pedals for five bucks. One of my earliest was a [Coron] Memphis Distortion, an MXR knockoff.

I'd heard something about the Big Muff. I went into this not great guitar shop in Seattle, and they had a stack of new Big Muffs for $25 each, so I bought one – just one – and loved it. What's left of it is in the Museum of Pop Culture, in Seattle. It had literally been run over by our van.

Your pedalboard has grown a bit.

Yeah, right now, coming from the amp, it goes [MXR] Micro Amp, Vox wah, and a Little Big Muff. It's the cheapest Big Muff they make, and I think the best. And that includes so many clones that people give me. They're all chasing after the original Big Muff, but not necessarily beating it.

I borrowed a Strymon Flint and I had to go buy one because I used that a lot on the recording. I love the depth of the reverb. Modern Fender amps don't have as much reverb as the old ones. I've got the Phase 90 I used on a couple songs, and I used the DOD Overdrive a lot. Then I've got the Ibanez Tube Screamer. Stone [Gossard] gave me that pedal; I was like, "This is the best pedal ever. Why have I never had one?" It's a totally different tone than I've ever used, but I used that a lot on the last record.

Do you use the same amps for recording as on the road?

My main live amp is a Fender Hot Rod Deville. I've got one with four 10" speakers, but normally on tour I use one that has two 12s because that's kind of the standard. They're fairly predictable. I really like recording with Deluxe Reverbs, as well. I've got all the Fender '65 reissues… or *have* had them. I still have my original '65 Super Reverb, as well, but that's been mothballed for the last decade. – ***Dennis Pernu***

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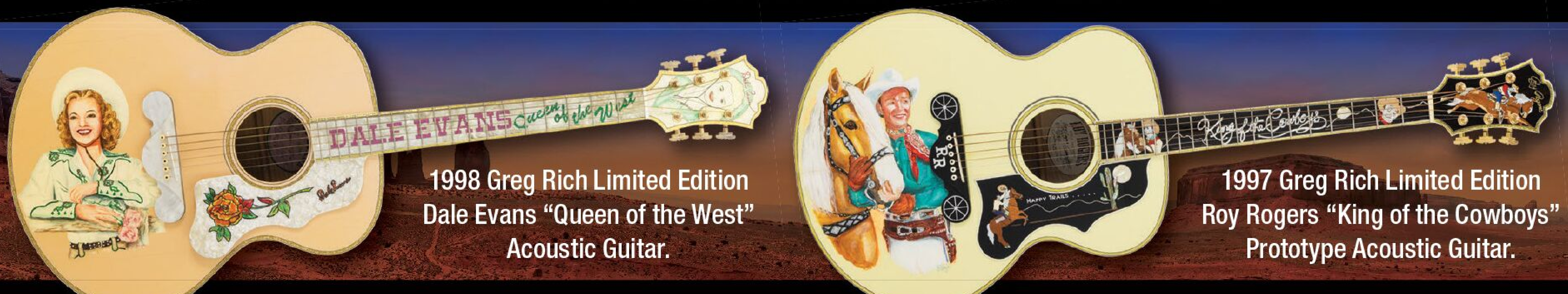

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Tony Brown and Theresa Spanke with a pair of Trout'scasters.

HONKYTONK HOMAGE

Guitars Venerate Bakersfield Landmark

Country-music fans familiar with the history of Bakersfield, California, know of Trout's nightclub. The last of the venues that gave birth to the "Bakersfield sound" epitomized by the twang of a Telecaster in the hands of Merle Haggard or Red Simpson, many stars strode its stage. Other legendary nightspots included the Blackboard, Lucky Spot, the Pumpkin Center Barn Dance, and others – now all gone. Trout's closed several years ago and was destroyed by fire in April of 2022.

Bakersfield luthier Tony Brown and partner, Theresa Spanke, run T&T Customs, which specializes in building instruments using wood from historical landmarks like the Pismo Beach Pier, Cain's Ballroom, and other locations. Shortly after the Trout's conflagration, they built guitars using wood salvaged there. Spanke is a Bakersfield singer/songwriter who was a member of the Trout's house band for more than 20 years. She did all of the design work and installation of the headstock logos, and designed the Trout's sign inlay for the neck.

"We were lucky," Brown said. "We almost waited too long. Several weeks after the fire, we spoke with our friend David Simpson, who is the son of Red Simpson, and his wife, Dawna, about building a guitar if there was any usable wood. David went to the site, where he met the demolition foreman and was led to the one spot where there was a partial wall still standing. He got several planks of the original redwood – enough to build 14 guitars, as it turned out. The following day, the remaining debris was removed, leaving only the concrete slab."

The 14 instruments were 11 Trout'scasters, one Precision-style bass, a dreadnought, and a Tele-style Red Simpson tribute.

"We stuck with classic Tele specs – 25.5" scale and two single-coil pickups," Brown detailed. "We went with Zhangbucker Paul Bunyans on some, and Hoagland 50/51s on some. Top-mounted Volume and Tone knobs with a three-way switch – classic Tele, dripping with twang and mojo."

Most Trout'scasters have a Texas Customs high-mass bridge, which Brown says improves sustain and is more comfortable.

"Fortunately, there was very little fire or smoke damage to the wood," he said. "And what little there was added to the mystique."

Given the limited supply, only the tops are Trout's wood. For seven of the 11 bodies, they used locally sourced old-growth Western red cedar. The other four are pine from a barn that stood for more than a century, swamp ash, Italian cypress, and figured claro walnut. Likewise, the fretboards are different woods.

"All of the necks are roasted flame-maple," Brown said. "Four are one-piece and seven are two-piece. On the two-piece versions, four of the fretboards are roasted flame-maple, three are Gabon ebony, and one is Brazilian tulipwood."

Customers who ordered Trout'scasters are "...primarily local professional musicians, music historians, collectors, everyday pickers who love the historical significance and have heartfelt memories of a place and a time gone by."

Brown enjoys working with non-profit organizations and charities.

"We are artists," the luthier said. "It's not just what we do, it's who we are. We make contributions of our time, talent, and treasure as we are able, to help not only those who need our help, but to preserve the history of this music we love. We have contributed guitars used as fundraising tools for charities in Texas and California, and musicians in need. We were commissioned by Citizens Preserving History, a local non-profit, to build a guitar using wood provided from Merle Haggard's childhood boxcar home, and donated the labor for the project. We have donated custom builds to be auctioned to assist with the medical/burial expenses of musicians, and their families. We would love to be able to do more of this." – ***Willie G. Moseley***

Tony Brown and Theresa Spanke: Victor Sanchez.

Ralph Towner: Caterina Di Perri/ECM Records.

RALPH TOWNER

Fifty Years and Counting

As a young musician, Ralph Towner wrote "Icarus," a revolutionary jazz piece that became a crossover hit for the Paul Winter Consort. Later, the classically trained guitarist (also a fine pianist and horn player) found his way to ECM records and, for more than 50 years, has released music of introspective guitar artistry, as well as playing in the groundbreaking group Oregon.

Towner's newest ECM effort is *At First Light* – which finds the 83-year-old playing better than ever.

One feeling that comes through the new album is optimism, like "Make Someone Happy" and "Little Old Lady." Were you aiming for a theme?

I noticed that these older tunes are an example of how one collects certain music in a lifetime that was shaped by them.

Your music flows so naturally it's sometimes hard to tell if it's composed or improvised. Tell us about the process of invention.

Generally, I compose the theme and notate it quite accurately. Then I improvise on the harmonic and melodic content in a manner, hopefully, that continues the atmosphere and direction of the written material. Over the years, I kept adapting each song in my own way; I abstracted them and modified them until the sources were no longer recognizable. Almost without noticing, I'd arrived in an idiom of my own.

Sixty-five years ago, you were a student of classical guitar. Who were you listening to?

I first heard a classical guitarist when I was graduating from university in music composition. I decided to put my self-taught jazz piano playing on hold and study guitar with a master in the Vienna music academy. I eventually listened to [guitarist/lutist] Julian Bream for stylistic inspiration. I found that the guitar was a very pianistic instrument, capable of sophisticated polyphony and myriad tone colors. My studies involved quite a bit of Renaissance and baroque music, which played a big part in shaping my writing and performance techniques.

How did you make the leap to jazz improvisation – and who are your inspirations?

I started improvising on the trumpet when I was eight years old and had access to recordings of various jazz and classical musicians. At that time, in the late '40s, I began to hear great swing and Dixieland trumpet players, and progressed by imitation. My solo recordings have always included my own compositions in which there are trace elements of the composers and musicians that have attracted me over the years – George Gershwin, John Coltrane, John Dowland, and Bill Evans, to name a few. The blend of keyboard and guitar techniques is an important aspect of my playing and composition, and I feel this album is a good example of shaping this expanse of influences into my personal music.

Strings are critical to players of nylon-string guitars. What kind do you use?

Not much change in strings – I've stayed with D'Addario for years.

Your music has been so inspirational. For example, one can't listen to the Pat Metheny Group without thinking about the impact of Oregon on that band. You essentially opened the door to a new kind of atmospheric jazz. Any thoughts on that legacy?

The beginning of my New York City years, starting in 1968, was a rich period to be writing and playing new pieces with musicians who had migrated from all over the world. New bands were forming like Weather Report, Miles Davis' sextet with Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter, and the Mahavishnu Orchestra, to name a few. Oregon came together in the West Village and combined compatible instruments like acoustic 12-string and classical guitars, Indian tabla, oboe, and double bass. We used odd meters, different harmonies and free improvisation.

What's behind your half-century association with the ECM label?

I made my first recording for ECM in '72 and felt very fortunate to have forged a friendship with [producer] Manfred Eicher. It's a rarity for an artist to remain with the same recording company for an entire career, and I am grateful to be one of them. Manfred's approach produces an atmosphere in the studio that's almost reverent, with very little talk, few takes, and nearly always recording in one to two days. This results in very spontaneous performances.

You're in your 80s, an age when many musicians are retired. What inspired you to record *At First Light*?

It was the joy of playing a new collection of my own and other composers' pieces. I practice every day to combat the stiffness that comes with age, and ramp up my hours at least two weeks in advance of the recording.

Classical-guitar icon Andrés Segovia performed into his later 80s. Do you plan to keep going as long as the music is there?

I'll keep on playing as long as I can! – ***Pete Prown*** **VG**

SONIC NICHE

Eight-String Basses

BY WILLIE G. MOSELEY

Emerging in ’60s catalogs from Hagström and Framus, eight-string basses occupy a distinct place among musical instruments – their potent, dense sound used to add texture or color.

Noel Redding used a Hagström H8 (and a Fender VI) backing Jimi Hendrix.

An all-mahogany solidbody with a short-scale 21-fret rosewood fretboard, Hagström’s H8 was best-known for being played by Noel Redding of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, who used one on *Axis: Bold As Love* and in concert. It also served as a prop for a promo video of “Burning of the Midnight Lamp” from *Electric Ladyland*. Other users included Andy Kulberg of the Blues Project, Danny McCulloch of Eric Burdon and the Animals, and legendary studio musician Joe Osborn, who played one on Richard Harris’ 1968 hit “MacArthur Park,” which peaked at #2 on *Billboard*’s Hot 100 chart that June. In ’79, Motörhead’s Lemmy Kilmister bashed a sunburst H8 on an episode of the BBC’s “Top of the Pops.”

Labeled F-800 in the U.S., like other guitars and basses from the Swedish maker, the bass’ tone was highly manipulable – a ’68 catalog from U.S. distributor Unicord touted its High, Low, Tone and Mute switches, as well as a Volume knob and Standby switch. It was available in Mahogany Sunburst or Cherry Red.

Framus’ 5/153-8 Caravelle was an eight-string variant of the 5/153 bass, using a classic thinline body with one sound hole, maple neck, and rosewood fretboard with 26 frets on a long scale. Its electronics included two Bill Lawrence/Billy Lorento humbuckers with separate Volume and Tone controls and a pickup toggle on the upper bass bout.

. Hagström H-8/Fender VII courtesy of N. Redding.

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Framus 5/153-8 courtesy of Hans-Peter Wilfer. Hondo H-1182 courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

Each string on this '68 Hagström H8/F-800 (left, in Cherry Red) has an accompanying string tuned an octave higher. Note the different-sized tuners. Framus' circa-1970 5/153-8 sported a five-over-three tuner arrangement on its Strat-like headstock. Rickenbacker's '93 4003S/8 had "toaster top" pickups, while Hondo's 1981 H-1182 was two basses in one.

Its offset tailpiece resembled Epiphone's Frequensator. Framus offered it in natural finish as well as Sunburst, Brown Shaded, Red, Black Rose, and Brown.

Interest in eight-string basses evolved through the '70s, when acclaimed luthiers started to custom-build them for famous musicians. Alembic offered one with neck-through construction and complex controls that was used by Greg Lake to record Emerson, Lake & Palmer's "Peter Gunn," "Fanfare for the Common Man," and other songs.

Mid-decade, Rickenbacker debuted an eight-string in its fabled 4000 series; the 4008 was initially a special order, but by the mid '80s the 4003S/8 was listed in company brochures, the "S" indicating Standard/base model with dot markers and no binding. Some had black hardware, and some were given Hi-Gain pickups while others had vintage-style "toaster tops." An eight-string variant of the 4005 hollowbody was also offered (4005-8), and in '88 the company made a run of 125 4003SPC Redneck models with red fretboards, some of which had eight strings.

In the mid '70s, the upstart Hamer company was touting its "modern vintage" instruments, influenced by classic shapes and styles. Co-founder Jol Dantzig recalled that a Hagström eight-string brought in for repair with a bowed neck and intonation problems sparked their interest.

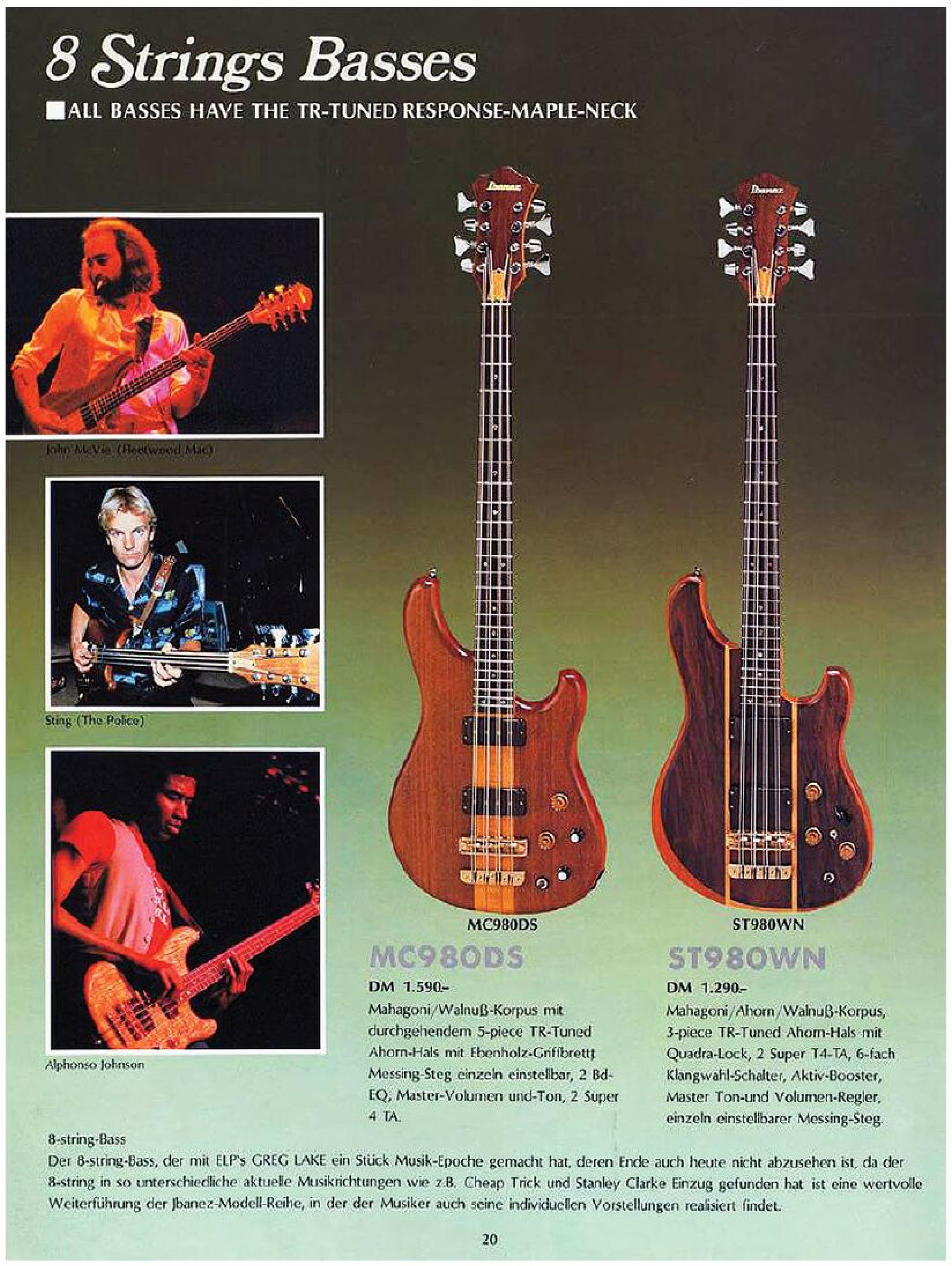
"It seemed obvious that the thin neck was a problem, and of course, only having four saddles on the bridge compromised the intonation completely," he said. "I immediately started thinking about how to make an eight-saddle bridge for it."

Hamer's model, the 8 String Bass, actually followed the 12 String Bass that put the company on the proverbial map (reportedly conceived by Cheap Trick bassist Tom Petersson in 1973, it was built in '77 with three E, A, D, and G strings).

"After building the 12 String Bass, it was clear that it wasn't for everyone because the sound was too radical." Dantzig said. "So we came up with a logical regression. The specifications evolved rapidly in those days."

The 8 String Bass had a double-cut

mahogany body (a nod to Gibson's earliest EB-0), one pickup, and a mahogany neck with



A custom-made Alembic eight-string in a 1981 catalog (left); based on the Series II instruments, it has the "Omega cut" at the end of the body. An '82 Kramer Stagemaster Deluxe 8 and '83 Stagemaster Deluxe 8 in custom-order purple. Note changes in the toggle array. Ibanez eight-strings in a 1980 German catalog.

Tom Petersson onstage with the Round Up 12-string.

Catalog/brochure images courtesy Steve Brown/Vintaxe. Tom Petersson: Willie G. Moseley.

RETRO REDUX

TOM PETERSSON'S GRETSCH ROUND UP 12-STRING BASS

Credited with inventing the 12-string bass (especially by bandmate Rick Nielsen), Cheap Trick bassist Tom Petersson collaborated with the Gretsch Custom Shop on a one-off 12-string that pays homage to the renowned Round Up.

Introduced in 1954, the 6130 Round Up was a dressed-down version of Gretsch's 6121 Chet Atkins, with a pine top. The specs for Petersson's bass are based on a 2013 reissue of the guitar; its headstock has a maple overlay, script Gretsch logo, a steer-head inlay, and Gotoh tuners. The neck was carved from a three-piece quartersawn maple blank, and the ebony fretboard has block markers with "cows and cactus" etching.

"We used the same pine as on Round Up guitars," said Stephen Stern, head of the Gretsch Custom Shop. "The top is a laminate, and plies on the back and sides are curly maple."

The top is bookmatched and has a clear pickguard as well as a G brand on the lower bass bout.

Like Petersson's Falcon 12-strings, the Round Up's bridge is a Space Control variant designed by Fender/Gretsch luthier Chris Fleming. The tailpiece is a Cadillac G style crafted specifically for 12-string basses, pickups are Seymour Duncan CSTM Supertrons, and the scale is 30.5".

The leather side trim is patterned after the original Round Up, the work done by Bill Silverman of El Dorado Guitar Accessories, who examined old photos and, with Stern's help, collaborated with a die maker to produce a replica.

Petersson was delighted with the finished instrument.

"I always wanted an orange 12-string, so why not go all the way?" he said, recalling the inspiration and noting that at Cheap Trick shows he often uses only this instrument, including for his solo, which is a medley of Lou Reed songs.

Petersson thoroughly enjoys working with the Gretsch Custom Shop.

"Steve does all the hard work," he said. "All I do is come up with something I like and convince them to go along with it. So far, so good. They've been fantastic and supportive."

"We were excited about this project," Stern noted. "It's always great to work with Tom; he's easygoing and has a wonderful sense of humor. Gretsch guitars are an excellent platform for different ideas." ***– Willie G. Moseley***

a 21-fret rosewood 'board. The scale was 30.5". The earliest examples had Rex Bogue pickups, followed by DiMarzio X2Ns and DiMarzio Bass One models. Most had active circuitry, and there was a two-pickup version.

Hamer picked up an important endorsement from songwriter/singer Nick Lowe.

"Nick had a great quote in the press about his, saying it sounded like 'dinosaurs eating cars,'" Dantzig recalled. "So we put him in an ad."

And while Hamer *did* advertise the 8 String Bass, "They were custom-order pieces in that they were made on request, even for dealers."

Summarizing the 8 String's place in Hamer history, Dantzig said, "They're usually used like hot sauce in the studio, so I'm always hearing from artists who've owned them for years but didn't necessarily wear them onstage. The eight-string was always a part of the mix; it just didn't get the spotlight like our 12s did."

A 1977 brochure from up-and-comers B.C. Rich proffered an eight-string Bich maple neck-through with a koa body, rosewood fretboard with cloud inlays, and a challenging control array. It may have been the first cataloged eight-string with four tuners on the head and four behind the tailpiece. In '81, a doubleneck Bich debuted with eight- and four-string necks. Both were cataloged through '85.

Paul Reed Smith also experimented with the concept and built a fretless example in '77.

The late '70s also saw the introduction of two Asian-made Ibanez eight-strings – the affordable, well-made ST-980 and MC-980.

Ca. '91 Hamer 8-String Bass (left). From the '83 catalog, B.C. Rich's eight-string Bich. 1981 Kramer XL-8 in walnut with maple stripes; a reverse configuration was also available, as were Cherry and Black finishes. Circa-'79 Ibanez ST-980.

Hamer 8-String Bass: Michael Neumann. Kramer XL-8 courtesy of John Majdalani. Ibanez ST-980: Willie G. Moseley.

A '79 catalog cited the ST-980's laminate body with maple center section, mahogany sides, and walnut top plate. Its neck was laminate maple and was attached with the company's Quadra-Lock neck mount. Its rosewood fretboard had 24 frets and was inlaid with abalone position markers. The nut was bone and brass, and scale for the four-string Studio was 34", while the eight-string was 32". Electronics included two sealed humbuckers and active circuitry.

The Ibanez catalog also included the neck-through MC-980, with identical

M. Egan Pedulla Octobuzz: Dino Perucci. Washburn B20-8 courtesy of Logan McLaren.

From Hondo's 1981 catalog, an H-1015-8. From '83, Mark Egan's first M.V. Pedulla Octobuzz bass, and from the '80s, a Washburn B20-8.

dimensions, scale, tuners, and bridge/tailpiece, a center portion of five-ply maple and walnut on a mahogany core, and bookmatched-ash top and back. The fretboard was ebony, and it had the standard bone-and-brass nut. Pickups were two active Super 4 single-coils, also sealed in epoxy.

A 1980 German catalog showed the MC-980 (called the MC980DS) and the ST-980 (ST980WN) on separate pages, along with photos of bassists John McVie, Sting, and Alphonso Johnson; Sting's was fretless and he used it extensively. Other names on the page included Greg Lake, Cheap Trick (*not* Tom Petersson), and Stanley Clarke.

Pro bassist Mark Egan endorsed Ibanez at the time, but not in America.

"During a tour of Japan with Pat Metheny, I met one of their bass designers, who introduced me to the four- and eight-string basses," he recalled.

Egan's eight-string is "…very comfortable, considering it's tuned in octaves. It has a full, clear, and powerful sound with very versatile double soapbar pickups and Bass, Treble, Volume and pickup-select features. The body has a good feel, similar to an Ibanez four-string, and the neck was playable in all positions."

In spite of their laudable sound, Ibanez eight-strings couldn't establish a foothold in the market. When the '81 catalog was published, eight-strings were gone.

At the same time, Hondo II was set to grab the torch. Its 1981 *Professional* catalog included the H-1015 and its octo-sibling, the H-1015/8. Both had symmetrical cutaways, a maple neck with a $32\frac{5}{16}$" scale and 24 frets, an offset pickup, and a satin brass bridge/tailpiece. While the H-1015 was available in four finishes, the H-1015/8 was offered in Brown Sunburst only. The "Longhorn" series doubleneck four- and eight-string bass (H-1182) was advertised in the same catalog, but not illustrated. Longhorn necks were given brass nuts.

In the early '80s, several eight-strings were offered by the feisty young Kramer company, which was making electric guitars with aluminum necks embedded with wood inserts and topped with ebonol fretboards.

Sporting a trendy silhouette that rivaled B.C. Rich models, Kramer's XL-8 appeared in 1981 with four tuners on the headstock of its aluminum neck and four mounted along the body, behind the bridge. Its scale was 30.75", as was the case for later eight-string Kramers.

Another early Kramer was the limited-production XL-9, which was offered as an eight-string variant even though it did *not* appear alongside the four-string in an '81 flyer or price list. And while Kramer was moving away from aluminum necks in the early '80s, its '82 and '83 catalogs showed them on the Stagemaster Deluxe 8.

Also in the early '80s, Egan began collaborating with luthier Michael Pedulla on an eight-string fretless called the Octobuzz. His first one dates from 1983, with neck-through construction (flame-maple center and maple wings). Electronics are active Bartolini pickups.

"It inspired many compositions," he said. "The fingerboard has an acrylic finish that gives the instrument a lot of sustain, which makes it great for melodies and soloing."

The '80s, of course, saw MTV and hair bands dominate the decade, emphasizing flashy visuals as much as sound – and influencing guitarmakers. One trendy example was Washburn's B20 Stage, with a body that resembled a Gibson Explorer and neck-through construction (laminated maple) on an ash body with a figured-maple top and a P/J pickup configuration. Like the Kramer, its eight-string variant (B20-8) had four tuners on the headstock, four on the body.

Still offered today, eight-string basses are some of the highest-quality instruments no matter their builder or country of origin. Still, collectors will likely never see them as more than a curiosity.

Special thanks to Randy Anderson. **VG**

While its pristine condition is stunning, the control layout (with Presence knob), brown panel, and oxblood cloth would seem to date this August build to an earlier time.

Amp and photos courtesy of Richie King.

LAST OF THE OXBLOODS

Fender's 1963 6G7-A Bandmaster

BY DAVE HUNTER

Those who love vintage amplifiers are often fascinated by little anomalies that present themselves in an otherwise period-correct specimen, and when that amp is a mint-condition sweetheart from the golden age, so much the better.

1963 FENDER BANDMASTER 6G7-A

- Preamp tubes: four 7025, two 12AX7
- Output tubes: two 5881/6L6GC
- Rectifier: solid state
- Controls: Normal channel: Volume, Treble, Bass; Vibrato channel: Volume, Treble, Bass, Speed, Intensity; shared: Presence
- Speaker: originally two 12" Oxford 12M6 or 12L6, upgraded in 1964 to two Fender-issue Utah models
- Output: approximately 40 watts RMS

Finding a 60-year-old guitar amp in near-showroom condition is always a breathtaking experience, but it's also a surprise when said amp has been in the hands of a member of a major heavy-metal band for the bulk of its existence. Fortunately, owner Richie King never toured this fascinatingly transitional 1963 Fender Showman piggyback set while on the road with his band Sorcery, and used it only briefly in the studio. As such, it's a veritable time capsule – and another fun example of Fender's propensity to blur the lines of model evolution in the 1950s and '60s.

"In 1973 or '74, I was at ABC Music in Burbank – a great store visited by many pro players, as it was close to studios like Warner Brothers, Disney, NBC, and many independents in the area," King tells us. "It

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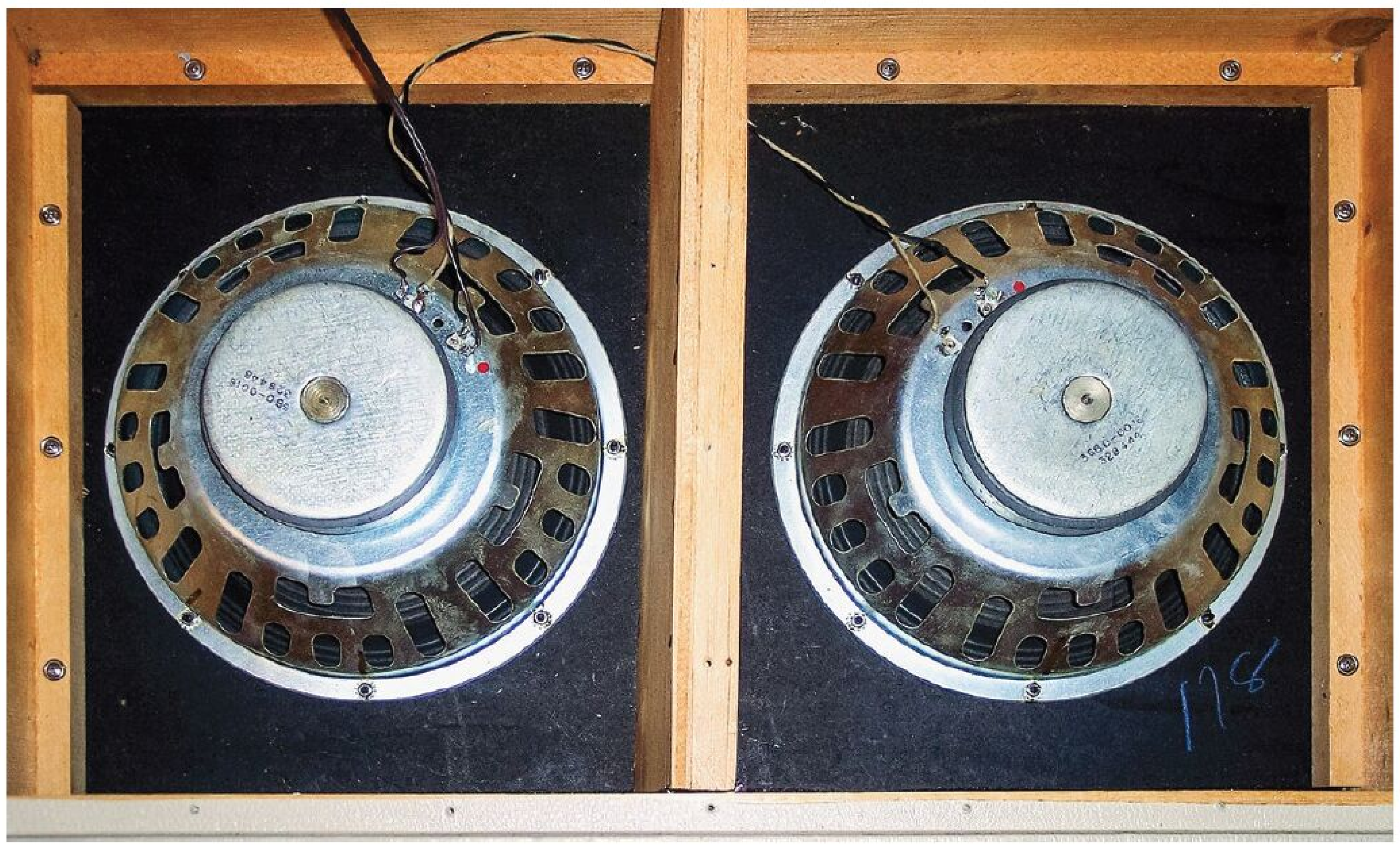


was a Saturday morning and I was talking with the owner, Paul Lavoe, and his son Jeff, when an older gentlemen came in to sell an amp he had purchased from the store many years earlier. At first, Paul didn't recall the gentleman, but then he reminded Paul that he had ABC order upgraded speakers shortly after he bought the amp.

"The gentlemen explained that he did not use the amp for guitar, but for singing and amplifying his Cordovox accordion with his band. Paul then remembered and said, 'Yes, the Bandmaster!' The gentleman went on to say that at the time he wanted a fuller sound, and Paul then remembered ordering the two 12" Utah special speakers that were then installed at the store. They're still in the amp today and are in like-new condition"

The wrench in the works came, however, when Lavoe explained that ABC Music didn't deal in used gear. But King was intrigued, so he and the owner headed to the parking lot, where the guy opened his Econoline to reveal a '63 Bandmaster in near-mint condition.

"The gentleman told me he'd retired from playing about a year after buying the amp because at the time, weddings, parties, and clubs wanted more-current pop music, and age was catching up with him. He said the amp was used on just a few dates before he retired, so it was collecting dust and he could use the money."

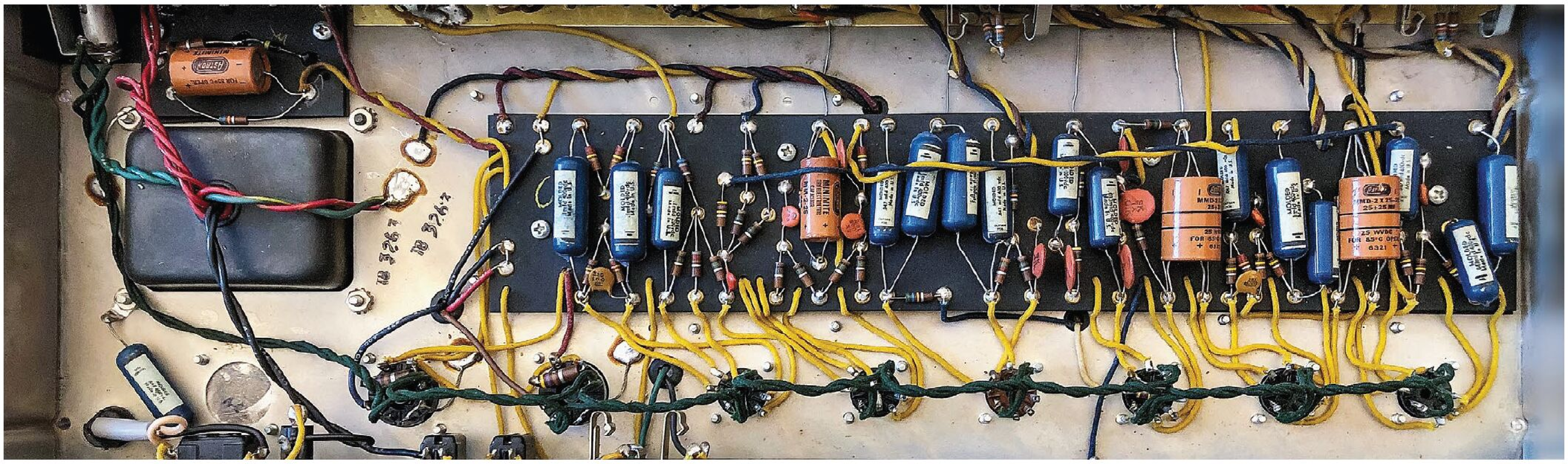
They struck a deal and King took the amp home. Being a bass player, he knew he wouldn't use it regularly, if at all. A year or two later, he co-founded Sorcery, which recorded several albums and undertook numerous nationwide tours, developing a reputation for bombastic stage shows.

Date-coded 1964, the 12" Utah speakers were special ordered by (and installed at) ABC Music.

"With all the film, TV, album, and session work I've recorded over the years, this amp was only used once I can recall, and that's when Sorcery recorded our first album in March of 1978 at Warners," King tells us. "My guitar player, Richard 'Smokey Huff' Taylor, and I were talking about the lead parts he was going to lay down the next day. I came up with this crazy idea to take two of my 8x10" SVT cabinets and lay them down about four feet apart and place a baffle over them, like a speaker tunnel, then place the bandmaster at one end of the tunnel and a microphone at the other end. The sound was amazing! That's the last time the Bandmaster was played.

"It has never been on the road, and except for that one short drive to Warner, it never left my home. In the 50 years I've owned this amp, it may have clocked about 10 hours of use. I don't think the chassis had been removed until I took it out for these photos."

As unusual as such minimal use of a vintage amp might be, equally unusual is the format of this blond-Tolex, brown-panel set with oxblood grillecloth.

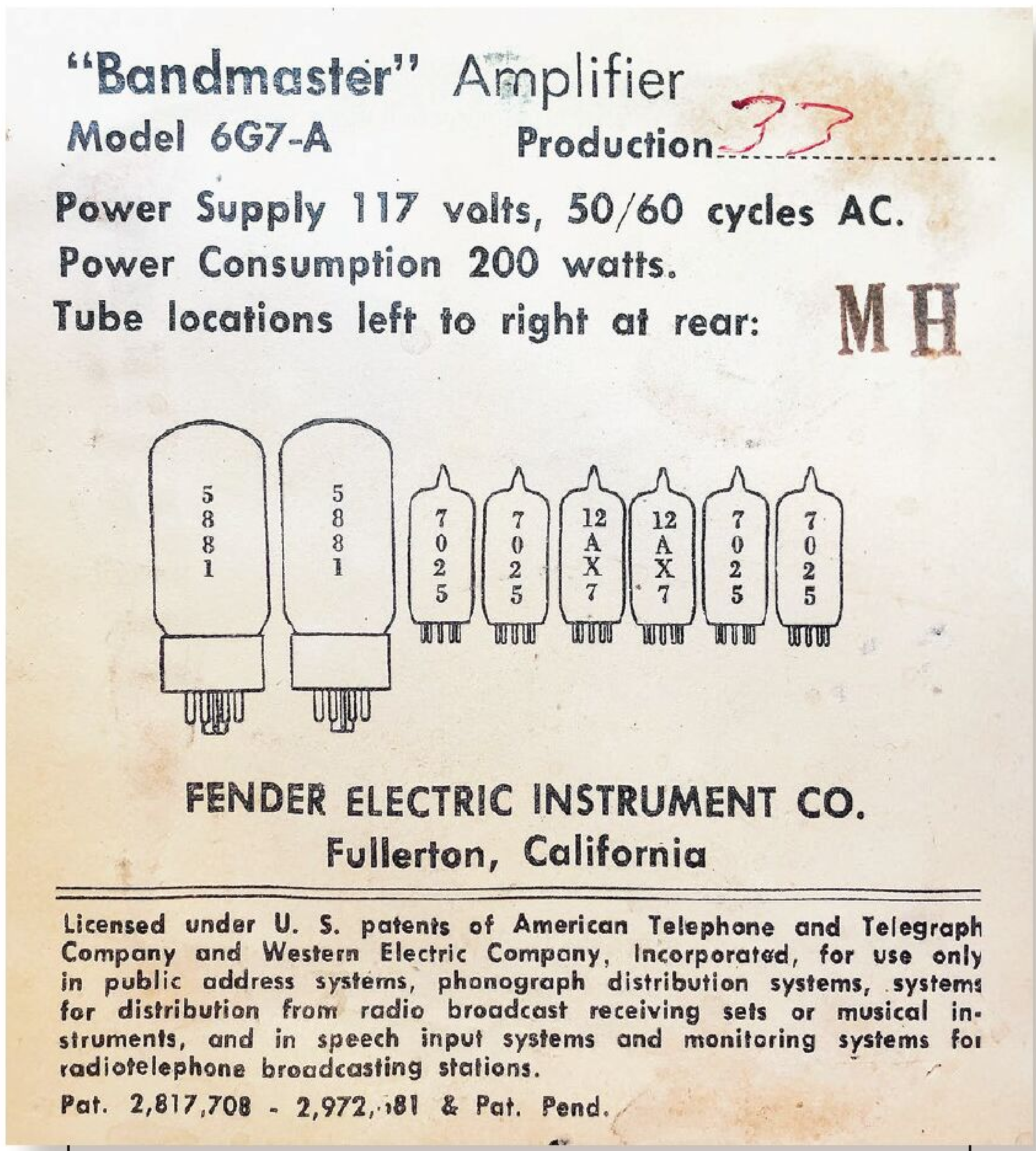


A look inside the chassis not only reveals an entirely original circuit and components, but likely the first view of this stuff since the amp left the factory.

A stamp on the tube chart of this model 6G7-A Bandmaster indicates "MH" for August 1963, and a "3263" stamp inside the chassis also pins its completion to early August (32nd week of 1963). The thing is, most sources indicate Fender stopped shipping Bandmasters with oxblood in April or May of '63 when the wheat-colored grille came into use. Also, Fender introduced the AA763 circuit to the Bandmaster (and other early blackface models) that July, as the designation indicates ("7" for July, "63" for the year).

The company was notorious for using superseded tube charts in the late '50s and early '60s, and we've certainly seen that practice cause confusion with dating vintage examples. But the AA763 circuit brought several significant design changes, some of which are easily identifiable at a glance, even from the front panel: the complex vibrato effect of the '60-'63 amps was replaced by a much simpler opto-cell tremolo circuit, and the Presence control and related circuit were eliminated, with Bright switches added instead on each channel. King's 6G7-A has the complex earlier vibrato circuit, which used two and a half preamp tubes to achieve its near-true-vibrato-like warble, and the Presence control remains among other features of the earlier circuit.

"I believe I could have the last 6G7-A blond Bandmaster with brown panel and oxblood grille!" King tells *VG*. He is still pampering the amp, which did not make the recent studio jaunt for the recording of Sorcery's new self-titled album.



"Bandmaster" Amplifier
Model 6G7-A Production 33

Power Supply 117 volts, 50/60 cycles AC.
Power Consumption 200 watts.
Tube locations left to right at rear: MH

5881 5881 7025 7025 12AX7 12AX7 7025 7025

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Fullerton, California

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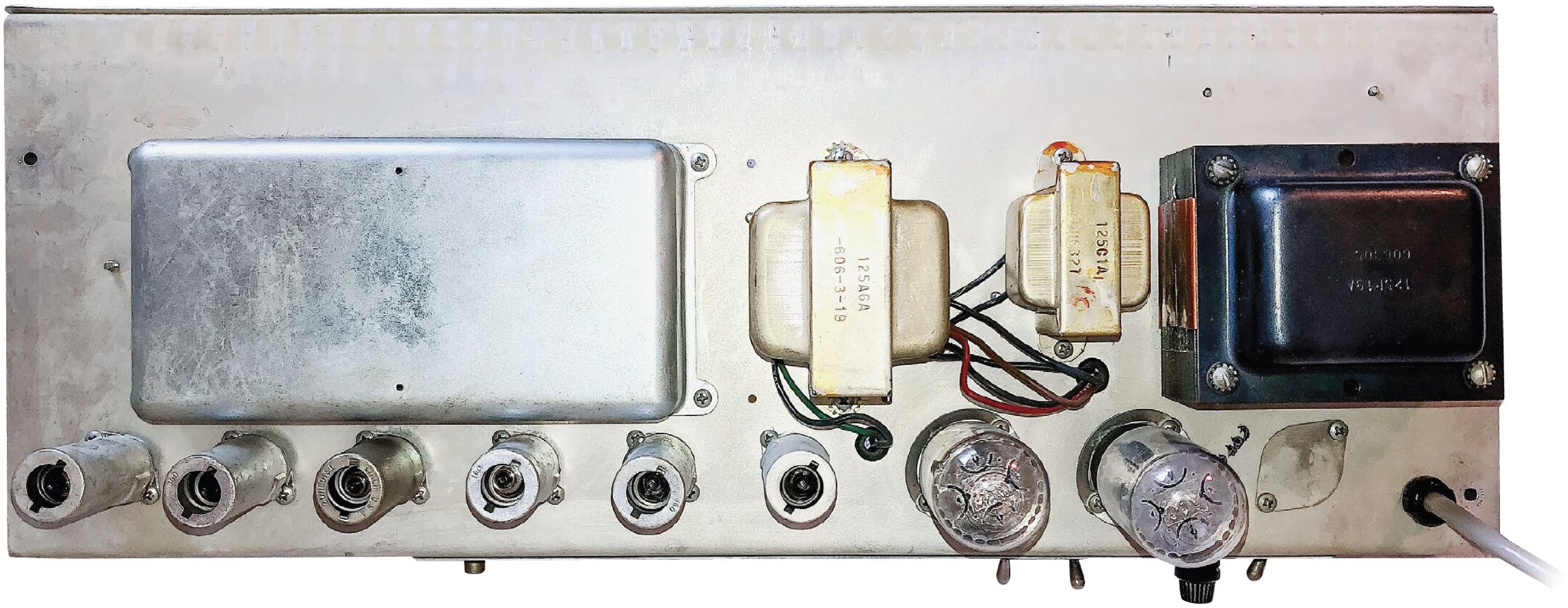
The tube chart shows an MH date stamp, indicating August '63.



"Not a reissue!" The shiny chassis and transformers look like they could have rolled off the assembly line last week.

Richie King's prototype B.C. Rich Stealth bass was featured in the November '08 issue of *VG*.

Classics

Bill Fudge's Micro-Frets Huntington carries serial number 1496; it's "4-24-1969" stamp indicates an assembly date. It was modded by Ralph Jones at the Micro-Frets factory.

'69 Micro-Frets Custom Huntington courtesy of Bill Fudge.

Several years before he became a luthier who deserves much greater recognition, Ralph Jones sold new Fender guitars and amps out of his home studio in Rockville, Maryland.

One early customer was Bill Fudge, a high-school kid who in 1959 was ready to move beyond his Silvertone and into his first real rig – a demo/holdover sunburst '57 Strat and new tweed Bandmaster. In the years to come, he'd use it in a few different bands, including one called The Upsetters (the name admittedly stolen from Little Richard's defunct backing band) with other local musicians named Bobby Fischgrund, Bill Hawkins, Leroy Taylor, Nicky Dawson, Paurl Hersh, and Jack Casady. They stayed busy playing rock and roll at teen dances and even earned a one-year recording contract with a local label, where Mickey Baker helped with their music. Still, they never released a song, and a few years later Casady went west to join Jefferson Airplane.

After getting his Fender set, Fudge didn't talk to Jones for nearly a decade, when Jones called one day to say he was building a line of guitars – and being sued by Fender over his designs! To prep his defense, he asked to borrow Fudge's Strat, loaning him a Jaguar to play in the meantime. A year later, Jones called again.

"He told me he'd won the lawsuit and was going into full production at his factory in Frederick," Fudge recalled. "He thanked me for helping him and, in appreciation, offered to build a guitar for me."

After yet another year, Jones presented Fudge with a top-of-the-line Micro-Frets Huntington.

"He said he'd built eight blond versions of it, kept the first for himself, and gave others to Buddy Merrill, Carl Perkins, Charlie Byrd, Mark Farner, me, and two others I don't remember. He showed me a photo of Mark Farner holding his outside the front door of the factory.

"They were nice instruments, and although I wasn't in a band at the time, I played mine around the house," Fudge noted. "It was big, and being all maple, a little heavy. After awhile, I didn't care for the positioning of

the control knobs under the edge of the pickguard."

He took it back and asked Jones to give it guitar knobs similar to his Strat. "He was reluctant, but he did it, believe it or not (chuckles). He also carved a new pickguard that looked like the original but was scalloped near the controls. When he put the Fender knobs on, I could see them better and knew exactly where I was with them. He gave me back the original pickguard and knobs, and I kept all of it."

The end result was a one-of-a-kind instrument.

Unfortunately, Jones suffered a heart attack and died on April 18, 1972.

Through the '70s and early '80s, Fudge didn't play out while raising a family. He occasionally noodled on the Huntington, but it mostly stayed in its case until 1985, when he got a call from his old friend and bandmate Al Crandall, saying he was gathering a group to play '50s and early-'60s rock-and-roll at local venues.

"I said, 'That sounds like a lot of fun!' and we started The *Elder*ados (laughs) and we

Bill Fudge (left) with his Huntington in The Elderados, 1985. In front with a Strat is Al Crandall, his bandmate going back to junior high. The Corvette was a Fudge restoration from just a body and frame. The '57 Bel Air belonged to Crandell.

did shows for about a year and a half – pool parties in the neighborhood and other stuff before Al moved away. But it *was* a lot of fun for us old guys (laughs)."

Until five years ago, Fudge was clueless about Mirco-Frets' status in the vintage market.

"I took it to a dealer to have it cleaned, and he told me some of the early models were going for $6,000 and up. He'd dealt with some, but not a blond Huntington because they're so rare."

Now 81 and with his playing days behind him, in May of '23, Fudge decided the Huntington should find a new home, and he consigned it to a retailer.

For more on Ralph Jones and the Micro-Frets story, grab the March '17 issue of VG or visit www.vintageguitar.com/31810/the-micro-frets-saga.

The Elderados photo courtesy of Bill Fudge.

Price Guide

By Alan Greenwood & Gil Hembree

1950 Stromberg DeLuxe

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
1999	Alamo Guitars Tonemonger	USA made	$925	$1,200
1973	Ampeg G-212	Solidstate, 2x12	$200	$260
1981	Applause AA Models	U.S. made	$150	$225
1973	B.C. Rich Seagull		$2,600	$3,400
1966	Baldwin Nu-Sonic		$650	$850
1997	Bourgeois D - 20th Anniversary	Rosewood	$2,900	$3,800
1980s	Casio DG1		$75	$110
1999	Collings 002H		$3,000	$3,900
1967	Coral Vincent Bell Combo V2N6	2 pickups	$3,000	$3,900
1969	Danelectro Dane A Series 2N12	12-string	$1,500	$1,950
1940	D'Angelico New Yorker (Non-Cutaway)	Natural	$24,000	$31,000
1956	Decar Stratotone H44		$600	$800
1997	Dobro Model 75/Lily of the Valley	Floral pattern	$1,850	$2,400
1977	Electra MPC X350		$850	$1,100
1965	Epiphone Coronet (Solidbody)	Custom color	$5,000	$6,550
1965	Epiphone Embassy Deluxe		$5,000	$6,500
2007	Epiphone Les Paul Custom Silverburst		$575	$750
1965	Epiphone Sheraton	Sunburst	$5,450	$7,100
1950	Epiphone Zephyr Tenor	Natural, figured top	$850	$1,100
2004	Fender 50th Anniversary American Standard Stratocaster	Mexico	$625	$825
2000	Fender American Series Precision		$975	$1,275
2013	Fender Bass VI Pawn Shop		$525	$675
1970	Fender Capricorn	105 watts, 3x12	$640	$835
1999	Fender Deluxe 90		$200	$260
1965	Fender Esquire	Blond	$10,900	$14,100
1987	Fender Gemini Series	Gemini III	$140	$240
1973	Fender Jazz	Walnut	$3,000	$4,000
1979	Fender Lead I		$700	$900
2014	Fender '50s Relic/'51 NoCaster Custom Shop	NOS	$2,500	$3,300
2021	Fender Noventa Stratocaster		$675	$875
1948	Fender Princeton	Tweed, TV front	$2,300	$3,000
2012	Fender Select Jazz	Figured top, USA	$1,950	$2,550
2007	Fender Squire Vintage Modified Series	Various	$175	$230
1969	Fender Stratocaster	Sunburst	$12,000	$16,000
1958	Fender Telecaster	Blond, backloader	$23,000	$30,000
1961	Fender Telecaster Custom	Custom color	$40,000	$55,000
2010	Fender '61 Telecaster Custom	NOS	$2,500	$3,300
1960	Fender Twin	Brown tolex, 80 watts	$13,000	$17,000
2001	Flatiron F-Style	Festival, Gibson Montana	$3,100	$4,100
1999	G & L ASAT Z-2 Limited Edition		$1,250	$1,625
1975	Gallagher Doc Watson (Cutaway)		$2,700	$3,600
2020	Gibson 1960 Les Paul Standard Light Aged	Murphy Lab	$5,500	$7,100
1968	Gibson B-25	Red, white guard	$2,625	$3,425
2005	Gibson Chet Atkins Country Gentleman		$2,450	$3,200
1970	Gibson EB-3		$1,850	$2,400

Featured Survey Participant Gary Dick with a 1967 Gibson ES-335 TDC.

YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	EXC. COND. HIGH
1952	Gibson ES-175 D	Sunburst, P-90s	$4,400	$5,700
1958	Gibson ES-335 TD	Sunburst bound neck, Bigsby	$31,000	$42,000
2011	Gibson ES-355 Summer Jam Series		$3,775	$4,900
1963	Gibson F-25 Folksinger	12-fret	$1,075	$1,400
1990	Gibson Firebird V Reissue	Sunburst, White, Black	$2,550	$3,400
2004	Gibson GA-15 RV Goldtone	1x12, round baffle hole	$450	$650
1925	Gibson GB-1	Resonator, diamond-flange	$1,775	$2,300
2004	Gibson J-100 Xtra		$1,650	$2,200
1965	Gibson J-50	Early '65, wide nut	$4,000	$5,300
1966	Gibson L-4 C or L-4 CN	Natural or sunburst	$2,300	$3,000
1993	Gibson Le Grande		$7,500	$9,700
2003	Gibson Les Paul Custom Music Machine	Quilted	$3,100	$4,100
2008	Gibson Les Paul Junior John Lennon LTD		$4,200	$5,500
1990	Gibson Les Paul Standard	Plain top	$1,750	$2,350
1962	Gibson LG-0	Plastic bridge	$950	$1,250
1902	Gibson Orville Gibson	Very rare, historical	$70,000	$95,000
1969	Gibson SG Custom	White, Lyre, 3 piece neck	$5,000	$6,500
1967	Gibson SG Standard	Cherry	$6,700	$8,700
1970	Gibson SJN Deluxe (Country-Western Jumbo)	Non-adj. saddle	$2,050	$2,700
1937	Gibson TB-12		$50,000	$65,000
2006	Gibson X-Plorer/ X-Plorer V New Century		$1,150	$1,500
1955	Gretsch Chet Atkins Hollow Body (6120)	G-brand, Western	$13,200	$17,300
1954	Gretsch Electro II Non-Cutaway 6188	Natural	$3,500	$4,600
1956	Gretsch Round-Up (6130)	Mahogany (few made)	$12,000	$15,800
1959	Guild Aristocrat M-75		$4,200	$5,500
1987	Guild Detonator		$575	$750
1987	Guild JF-65-12	Maple	$2,200	$2,850
1983	Guild SB-601		$525	$700
1985	Guild X-100 Bladerunner		$2,900	$3,800
1970s	HiWatt DR 504 Custom 50 Head	50 watts	$2,700	$3,500
1986	Ibanez AXB Axstar Series	Various models	$350	$475
1973	Ibanez Model 2363R		$1,075	$1,400
1968	Idol Hobby 10		$110	$145
1968	Kay K48/K21 Jazz Special	3 pickups	$500	$650
2000s	Kentucky KM-800	F-style	$340	$440
1983	Kramer Pacer Custom		$1,000	$1,300
1999	Kustom KGA-10 VC		$35	$45

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YEAR	INSTRUMENT	FEATURES	EXC. COND. LOW	HIGH
2000s	Larrivee OMV-50/50E		$1,950	$2,600
1958	Magnatone Model 280/ Custom 280	50 watts, 2x12+2	$1,800	$2,350
1991	Marshall JCM 800 Model 5215 Combo	1x15, ss, mos-fet	$290	$375
1987	Marshall Model 1960A/ 1960B 4x12 Speaker Cabinet	Custom color	$475	$625
2001	Marshall Model 8008 Valvestate Rackmount	Dual 40-watt	$145	$195
1923	Martin 5-28		$3,500	$4,600
1950	Martin 000-28		$12,000	$15,600
2014	Martin 000RS2		$500	$650
1977	Martin 00-28	Special order	$2,700	$3,600
1918	Martin 0-18K		$5,650	$7,350
2007	Martin CSN (Gerry Tolman Tribute)		$2,125	$2,775
1934	Martin D-18H	Hawaiian	$60,000	$78,300
1994	Martin D-28S		$2,650	$3,450
2020	Martin D-45V		$7,100	$9,300
2007	Martin Felix The Cat	Felix III, 1000 made	$475	$625
2021	Martin J-40		$2,200	$3,000
1997	Martin OM-28		$2,250	$2,950
1996	Martin SPD-16TR		$1,325	$1,750
2003	Matchless Nighthawk	2x10	$1,300	$1,700
2005	Mesa-Boogie Nomad 45 Combo	1x12	$600	$800
1965	Mosrite Celebrity	Custom color	$725	$950
1993	Music Man Sterling	4-string	$975	$1,275
1962	National Studio 10		$550	$725
1973	OME Mogul	Plectrum, silver	$2,300	$2,975
1994	Ovation Custom Legend 1869	Super shallow	$800	$1,050
1970s	Park Model 1231 Vintage 20 LE Combo	20 watts, 1x12	$2,300	$3,000
2008	Paul Reed Smith Mira Maple Top (MT)	Maple over mahogany	$975	$1,250
1987	Peavey Dyna-Bass Limited		$600	$775
1998	Peavey TL-Six		$725	$950
1990	PRS CE Bass-4	Alder	$950	$1,225
1980	Rickenbacker Model 4001S		$1,700	$2,200
1970	Rickenbacker Model 335		$3,500	$4,550
1999	Rickenbacker Model 425V63		$1,725	$2,250
1994	Robin Avalon Classic	Various options and specs	$1,500	$2,000
1992	Santa Cruz Vintage Artist Custom		$3,150	$4,100
1968	Silvertone Model 1420	5 watts, 1x8	$350	$450
1967	Standel Custom Thinbody 502		$875	$1,150
1950	Stromberg Deluxe		$16,000	$21,000
1980s	Sunn SL 260	60 watts, 2x12, reverb	$550	$725
1956	Supro Super 1606E	White and grey	$650	$850
2000	Taylor 410		$900	$1,175
2013	Taylor 856ce		$1,950	$2,500
2007	Taylor K24ce		$2,600	$3,400
1979	Tokai J-200N		$625	$825
1960s	Univox Hi Flier		$650	$850
1950s	Vega Director Combo	Tubes	$500	$650
1969	Vox Astro IV	Violin Beatle bass	$975	$1,250
1980s	Wal Custom (IV)	Mark II	$6,000	$8,000
1960s	Wurlitzer Wild One Stereo		$700	$900
1976	Yamaha YTA-400		$250	$325

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JANGLE ALL THE WAY

Marshall Crenshaw's *Field Day*

By Pete Prown

Marshall Crenshaw with his 12-string Epiphone Wilshire onstage in New York City, June '83.

Marshall Crenshaw's brief chart run remains a bright spot of 1980s rock – effectively, the final blast of New Wave before the genre was buried by *Thriller*, *Purple Rain*, and other Big '80s production jobs. During that span, Marshall wrote and recorded a number of cassette classics, notably "Someday, Someway" and the extra-jangly "Whenever You're On My Mind."

Prior to going solo, Crenshaw was in the cast of *Beatlemania*, playing John Lennon on Broadway and touring with the smash musical. The singer/guitarist later formed a trio with his brother, Robert, on drums, and bassist Chris Donato, recording a self-titled debut in 1982 and producing a mid-sized hit with "Someday, Someway" striking #36 on the charts. He followed with 1983's *Field Day*, which didn't chart as high but contained his Byrds-tinged gem "Whenever You're on My Mind." This fine album has just been reissued, with bonus tracks, as *Field Day: 40th Anniversary Expanded Edition*.

Crenshaw notes that '60s pop singer Jackie DeShannon was the main inspiration for "Whenever You're On My Mind."

"Jackie's 'When You Walk In the Room' came out in late '63 and was a monster smash hit single in the Detroit area, where I grew up," he said. "It's still a favorite of mine, and now sounds well ahead of its time with the dominant electric 12-string; in fact, Jackie was an influence on The Byrds, and friends with them. I also put my own Byrds reference into the song – at the end of the choruses, I played a guitar countermelody that's a quote from Roger McGuinn's solo on 'Turn! Turn! Turn!'."

Part of the allure of *Field Day* was its live-in-the-studio vibe, which Crenshaw notes was intentional.

"On most tracks, there's just one electric rhythm guitar and perhaps an overdub or two. The drums and bass were done in layers, but when I cut my main rhythm-guitar part, I'd always go for a complete take in one pass, like I was playing the song onstage. If I made a mistake, I'd start over again from the top. That's partly where the live energy comes from; plus, we were young guys who were high on life."

On "For Her Love," Crenshaw takes a lead using double-stops, a stylistic nod to Buddy Holly's rock

Marshall Crenshaw 1983: Ebet Roberts.

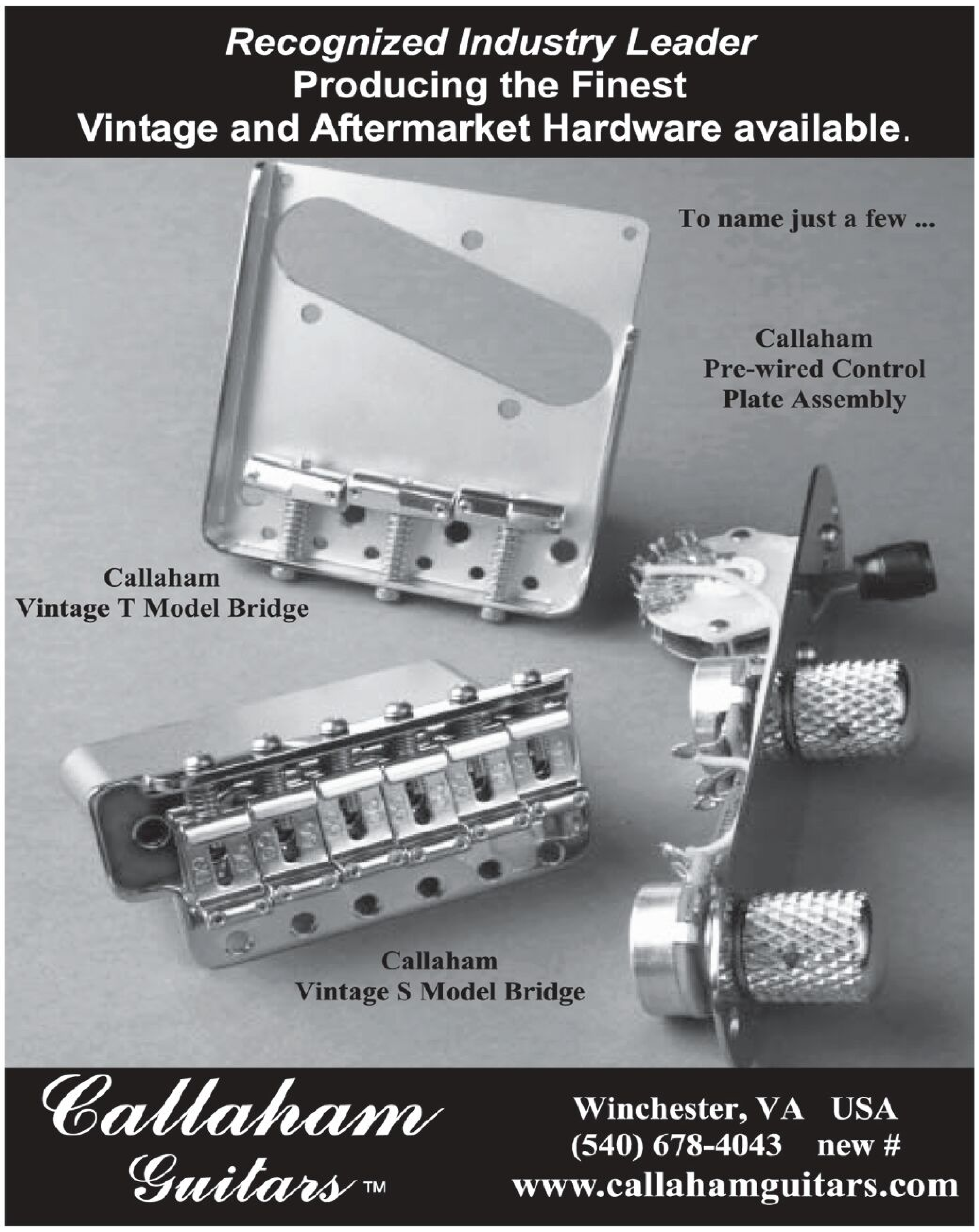
and roll (Marshall later played Holly in the 1987 hit film *La Bamba*). Crenshaw agrees with the comparison: "It does sound like something that [guitarist] Tommy Allsup might've played on one of Buddy's records, and I probably had that in mind at the time. Onstage, I sometimes mention that I saw Buddy Holly on 'The Ed Sullivan Show' when I was four years old, but he was blurry because I needed glasses and nobody knew it yet. At the time of *Field Day*, I would've also been listening to Nile Rodgers, Jody Harris, Robert Quine, and maybe some Andy Summers, because I occasionally used a chorus pedal. I was friends with Danny Gatton and invited him to play a solo on 'One Day With You.' He didn't show up at the session, so I tried to play something like I thought Danny might've played."

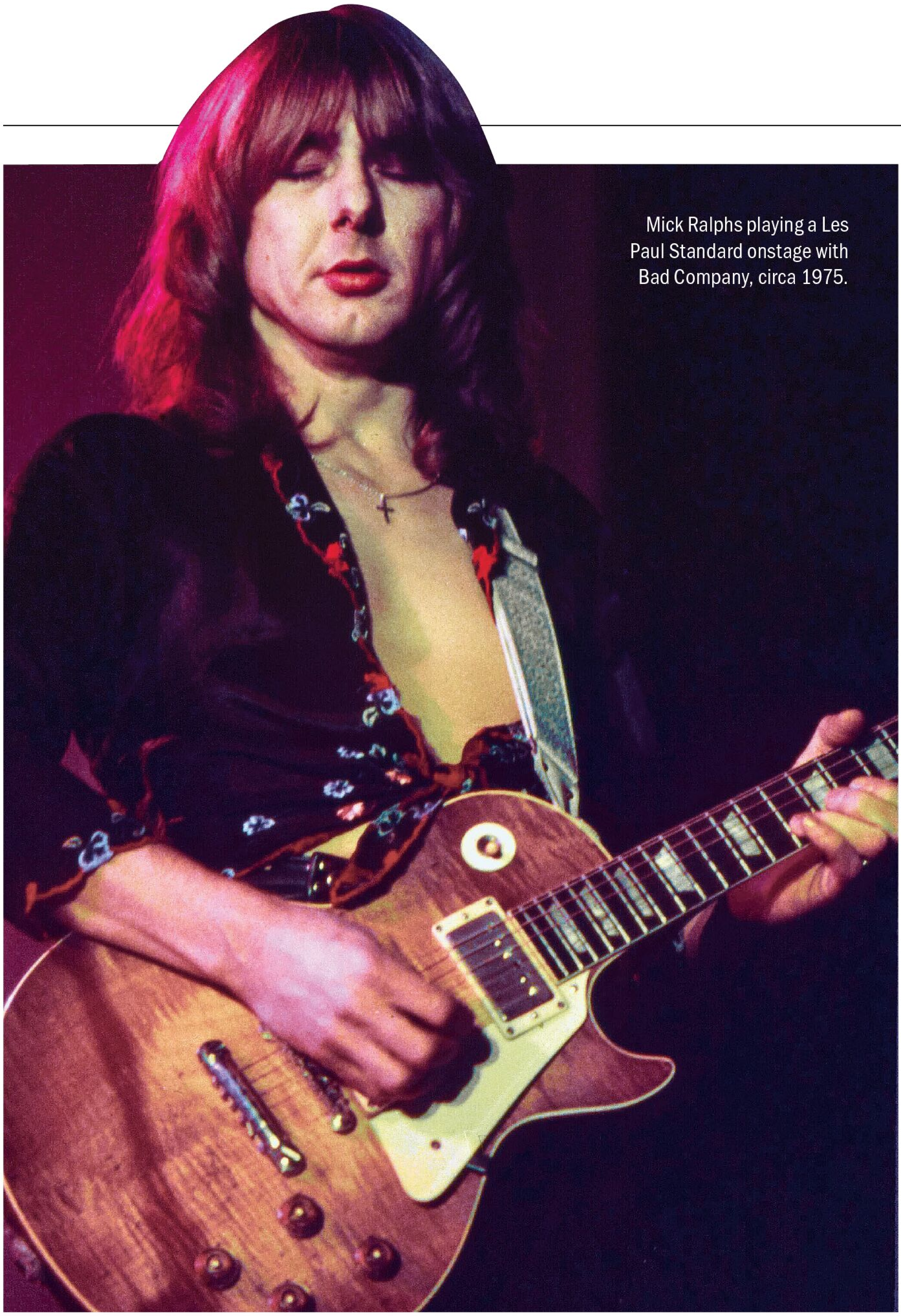
Another memorable aspect of the album is its honest, vintage-studio sound, as if Crenshaw and his band time-traveled back to Sun Studios in the mid '50s. For gear, he recalls, "About 60 percent of the time, I played a Stratocaster through a Vox AC30. I also had an Epiphone Coronet with a P-90, and had just gotten a '55 Gretsch Jet Firebird; I'd wanted one of those since I first saw Bo Diddley on the cover of *Go Bo Diddley*. I used two electric 12-strings – an Epiphone Wilshire and a Carvin – as well as a '63 Tele during the *Field Day* sessions, but only used it for the solo on 'One Day With You.' I tried acoustic guitar on one song, but got rid of it; it's electric guitars only on the album. Other amps were a Dual Showman and a Music Man paired with that black Carvin 12-string for 'All I Know Right Now.'"

Field Day was helmed by a new producer on the scene, Steve Lillywhite, then *just* becoming known for his work with an Irish band called U2. Engineering was handled by another rising heavyweight, Scott Litt, who went on to produce six R.E.M. albums. For the luminous studio tone, Marshall says, "If I remember correctly, there's very little reverb on the album. Normally, I didn't use reverb on guitar, but in '74 I got three albums that really spun my head around – *The World Is Waiting For the Sunrise* by Les Paul & Mary Ford, *The Bop That Just Won't Stop* by Gene Vincent, and *The Sun Collection* by Elvis Presley. After that, I always wanted to use slap-echo. By the time of *Field Day*, I was using a Boss Analog Delay, then straight to the amp."

"Whenever You're On My Mind" remains a critical track of the early decade, just before such stripped-down rock was steamrolled by drum machines, synthesizers, and over-the-top production. Reflecting on his musical legacy, Crenshaw muses, "Popular music is always moving forward, plus the music business is fast-paced and competitive. If you have a chunk of time where things are working reasonably well for you, you should be grateful for that – and I am. From late '81, when [rockabilly singer] Robert Gordon's version of "Someday, Someway" was in the *Billboard* Hot 100, up to late '87, when the *La Bamba* soundtrack album was #1, there was always something, somewhere in the charts that had my name on it. And I've never stopped working since.

"As far as *Field Day* goes, I love it. It's my second album – but it's the first one where you can tell I'm a guitar player." **VG**





Mick Ralphs playing a Les Paul Standard onstage with Bad Company, circa 1975.

MICK RALPHS

Delivering in Bad Company

By Wolf Marshall

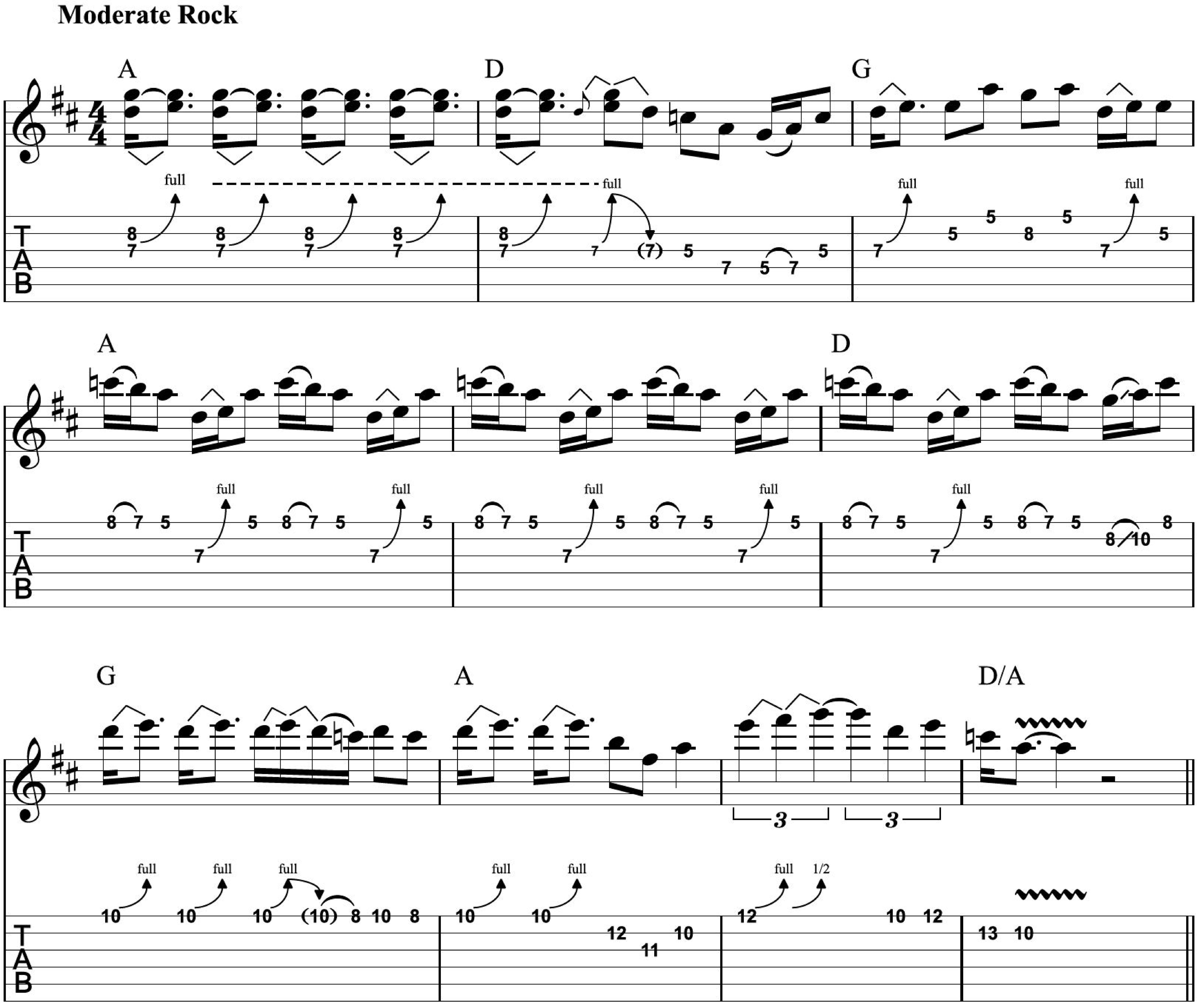
Unabashedly British and irresistibly swaggering, Bad Company personified '70s arena rock. Detractors denounced them as machismo, but fans have bought more than 40 million albums, 20 million in America alone. Guitarist/founder Mick Ralphs was a prime role model for numerous players.

Michael (Mick) Geoffrey Ralphs was born in Herefordshire, West England, on March 31, 1944. Raised on pre-Beatles radio, he was captivated by Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Jerry Lee Lewis. He began teaching himself guitar at 17 after hearing Steve Cropper on "Green Onions," and supplemented his studies by assimilating the blues lexicon of Freddy and Albert King, et al. He played rhythm guitar with local R&B bands, worked German nightclubs by the mid '60s with the Buddies and Doc Thomas Group, joined Jimmy Cliff's soul band in '69, and steadily grew into a skilled lead player. Silence, a '68 quartet lineup of Doc Thomas, became Mott The Hoople (referring to Willard Manus' novel of that name; a name suggested by Island Records producer Guy Stevens who imagined a group that evoked Bob Dylan singing with the Stones). Signed to Island in '69, the quintet with singer Ian Hunter recorded their debut, which featured Ralphs songs "Rock and Roll Queen," "Rabbit Foot" and "Half Moon Bay." *Mad Shadows* (1970) contained Ralphs' "Thunderbuck Ram" and "Threads of Iron," followed by *Wildlife*, a transitional album that flirted with country rock. *Brain Capers* had but one Ralphs offering, "The Moon Upstairs," and failed to chart in America and U.K. None were successful until *All The Young Dudes* ('72) – owing to longtime fan David Bowie's title song, their first and biggest hit. However, Ralphs became disenchanted with Mott's glam direction and departed in '73 to write songs with Free singer/guitarist Paul Rodgers, eventually forming Bad Company with Free drummer Simon Kirke and King Crimson bassist Boz Burrell.

Bad Company had supergroup status, its members being well-known by fans. Managed by Led Zeppelin's Peter Grant, it was the first act signed to Zep's Swan Song label, and produced its own music. *Bad Co* ('74) was a heavier, more-focused descendant of the Beatles' "white album" in its diversity of moods, timbres, and instrumentation with the brooding, piano-driven "Bad Company," shuffling guitar boogie "Can't Get Enough," bluesy riff rocker "Rock Steady," pop-metal strutter "Ready for Love" and gentle acoustic folkie "Seagull." It boasted Ralphs' hits "Can't Get Enough" and "Movin' On" and future classic "Ready for Love," reached #1 in *Billboard* and #3 in U.K., was certified five times platinum, and remains one of the best-selling albums of the '70s.

With a strong international following and breakthrough success in America (second only to Led Zep), Bad Company continued its ascent on *Straight Shooter* – a more-polished, harder record with Ralphs' anthem "Good Lovin' Gone Bad" and co-written "Feel Like Makin' Love," while *Run With the Pack* flaunted a string arrangement and piano on Rodgers' metallic title tune offset by a CSNY-tinged acoustic number "Do Right by Your Woman." Both cracked the Top 5. *Burnin' Sky* cracked the Top 20, then *Desolation Angels*

Mick Ralphs: Jeffrey Mayer/Pictorial Press Ltd /Alamy.



The aggressive blues-rock side of Mick's lead style is captured in this example from "Good Lovin' Gone Bad." The solo phrase begins with a double-stop bend with blues-meets-country implications in bars 1-4 and progresses to a driving riff-based A minor-pentatonic line in 4-6. Note the inclusion of the tasty C-B-A pull-off that colors the otherwise straightforward blues chestnut. The closing bars exploit high string bends and a phrase ending that reveals his Albert King influences. Check out the slow, wide string bend in 9 and the snappy hiccuping closure notes in 10. Both are melodic/rhythmic gestures typical of the blues icon.

redeemed the band, reaching #3 in U.S. and #10 in U.K.

Increasing use of synthesizers and strings indicated greater sophistication and anticipated the growing independence of Rodgers, who played the catchy synth-guitar solo on "Rock 'n Roll Fantasy." After a three-year absence, *Rough Diamonds* ('82) met a lukewarm reception before the group disbanded, ending its classic period with Rodgers.

Ralphs joined David Gilmour on his *About Face* tour in '84 and the next year released his first solo album, *Take This*. Bad Company persevered into the ensuing decades with stylistic changes and other vocalists, most prominently employing Brian Howe from '86 through '94. Under Keith Olsen's supervision, they dabbled with a glossy keyboard-laden sound on *Fame and Fortune* (dismissed by Ralphs as "obscurity and poverty"), reverted to a guitar-driven but studio-slick format with producer Terry Thomas on *Dangerous Age*, and reclaimed commercial success with *Holy Water*.

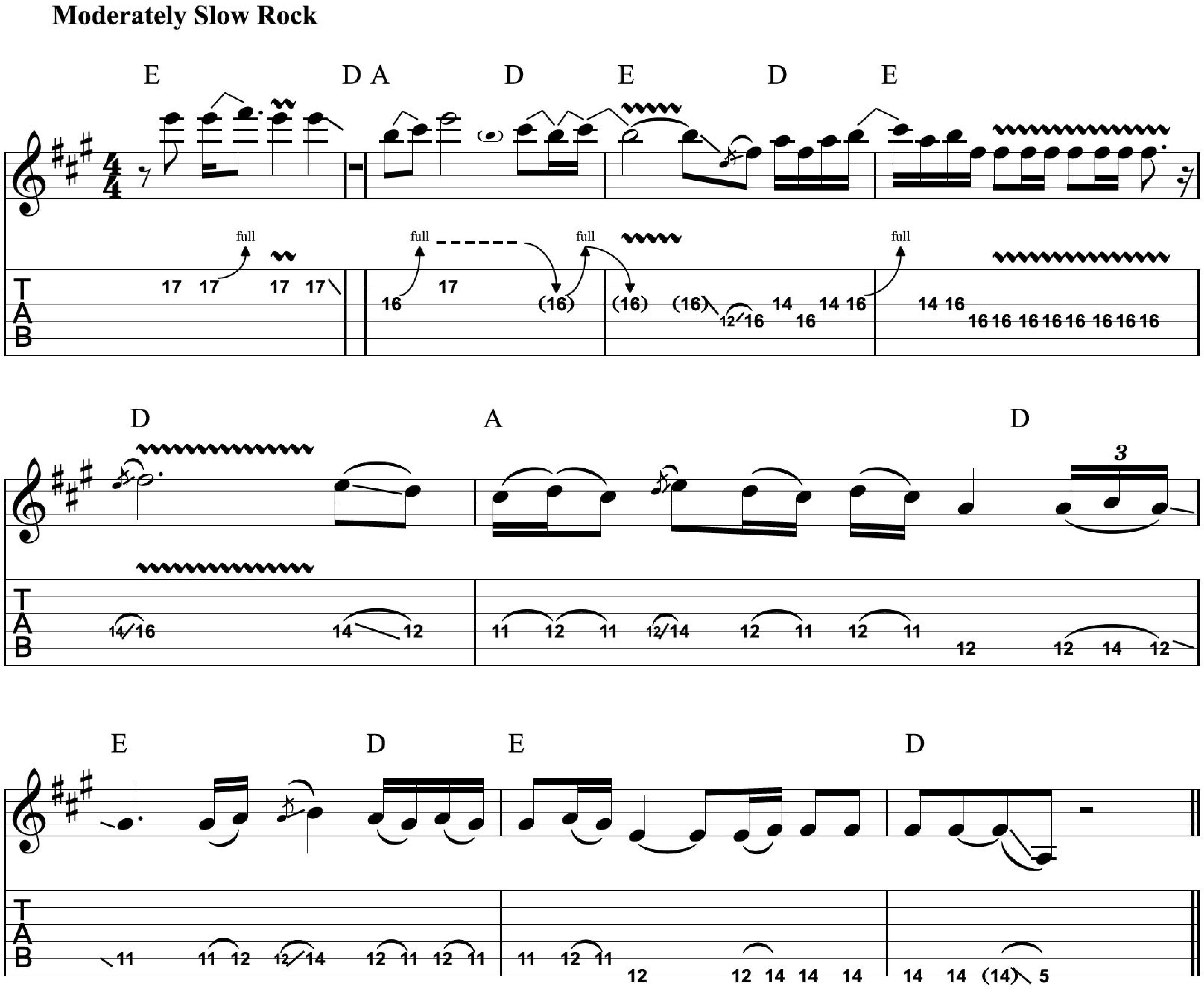
After a 1999 reunion tour with the original lineup, Ralphs withdrew from touring. In 2001, he released the instrumental *It's All Good* (with Kirke and Burrell), performed with Ian Hunter in'04/'05, rejoined Bad Company for a Florida date in '08, appeared with Mott the Hoople at London's Hammersmith Apollo in '09, formed Mick Ralphs Blues Band in '11, recorded *Should Know Better* and *If It Ain't Broke*, and played a final few concerts with Rodgers and a reconstituted Bad Company from '12 through '16; that year, he suffered a debilitating stroke and has not returned to performing. Guitarist Howard Leese joined on second/lead guitar, and recently shared with *VG* that Ralphs is in a nursing facility in England.

STYLE

Bad Company exemplified a no-frills pop-metal style popularized by Free and likened to the British "working-class" school of rock. They reworked guitar-driven riffs and R&B melodic elements of late-'60s blues-rock and made dramatic use of space, emphatic syncopation, heavy accented rhythm figures, layered electric/acoustic/keyboard textures, and theatrics of Zep-influenced metal while adhering to a minimalist ethos, simple pop-song formulas, and craftsmanlike lead work. Ralphs embodied those traits as composer in "Can't Get Enough," "Rock Steady," "Movin' On," "Ready for Love," "Good Lovin' Gone Bad,"

"Live for the Music," and co-written (with Rodgers) tunes "Feel Like Makin' Love" and "Deal With the Preacher."

As a lead player, Ralphs favored feel and melody over technical excess and was the quintessential team player, supplying memorable riffs, solid rhythm grooves, and tight solos that complemented songs and stressed thematic unity. He drew on traditions cultivated by Clapton, Beck, and Page, and purveyed an economic style of largely pentatonic content, exploiting its bluesy minor-pentatonic side for hard rock and contrasting major-pentatonic quality for quasi-country melodies captured tellingly on "Shooting Star" with its tough blues-based main solo and contrasting melodic approach in the outro. He occasionally exploited diatonic scalar sounds, especially on acoustic guitar ("Crazy Circles") or in more-colorful electric moments such as the coda entrance of "Bad Company." His licks were enlivened with soulful string bends, slow/wide vibrato, with varied attacks and dynamics occasionally colored with choppy phrasing and pinch harmonics ("Oh, Atlanta"). Ralphs regularly harmonized guitar melodies to create orchestrations, sometimes recorded live in the studio with Rodgers as in "Can't Get Enough." "Feel Like Makin' Love," "Run With the Pack," "Silver, Blue & Gold" and "Rhythm Machine" also conveyed this sound, furthering British antecedents begun with the Beatles ("And Your Bird Can Sing," "Come Together") and continued by Wishbone Ash, et al. Like Keith Richards, he had a penchant for open tunings and the chordal simplicity they afforded, and often conceived parts in alternate tunings; he devised a unique high-strung Open C tuning (low to high C-C-G-C-E-C with "bass strings in unison") for "Can't Get Enough" and "Movin' On," which he also employed for slide in addition to standard Open G. His style also included slide soloing in a metal context ("Gone, Gone, Gone") and pedal-steel country mannerisms as in the Open A-tuned "Take the Time." As rhythm guitarist, he provided metallic power chords, mutated boogie comping ("Movin' On"), simple dyad and triad figures ("Can't Get Enough"), single-note theme riffs ("Deal With the Preacher," "Live for the Music"), folk-flavored acoustic ("Feel Like Makin' Love," "Shooting Star," "Seagull") and lighter arpeggiated textures ("Bad Company," "Deal With the Preacher," "Silver, Blue & Gold"), the latter often delivered with a clean, processed tone.



"Shooting Star" boasts a melodious, metal-inflected outro solo that exemplifies Mick's sweeter side. At the forefront is the wide variety of phrasing and rhythmic options given this simple-but-effective passage. The mix of sustained notes with flowing 16th-note lines is decorated with singing vibrato, slurs, slides, bends and legato pull-offs and hammer-ons. He builds from a diatonic (major) scale source in A, but selects notes that emphasize and enhance the E-D-A chord progression and particular chord of the moment, as would a singer. These choices result in the major-pentatonic (A-B-C♯-E-F♯) feeling of bars 1-5 and the more-emphatic leaning on the major scale with D and G♯ notes and explicit half-step melodies (C♯-D and G♯-A) in 6-8 over the same changes.

ESSENTIAL LISTENING

Rock 'N' Roll Fantasy is a serviceable introduction to Bad Company music. Also recommended are *The Swan Song Years* compilation and *Holy Water.*

ESSENTIAL VIEWING

The classic Bad Company lineup is captured in several songs from a '74 TV show and "Best Songs in Two Concerts." Worth the search are a performance on "The Tonight Show with Jay Leno" and several video interviews with Ralphs.

SOUND

Ralphs' first pro guitar was a Burns with Tri-Sonic pickups, soon upgraded to a '66 Telecaster. While working with Jimmy Cliff in '69 he acquired a '61 Gibson SG/Les Paul with sideways vibrola. He played it on Mott's debut album before replacing it with a modified '54 Les Paul with stop tailpiece and P-90 pickups on *Mad Shadows.* Inspired by Leslie West, he also played a '57 Les Paul Junior, then later favored Fenders

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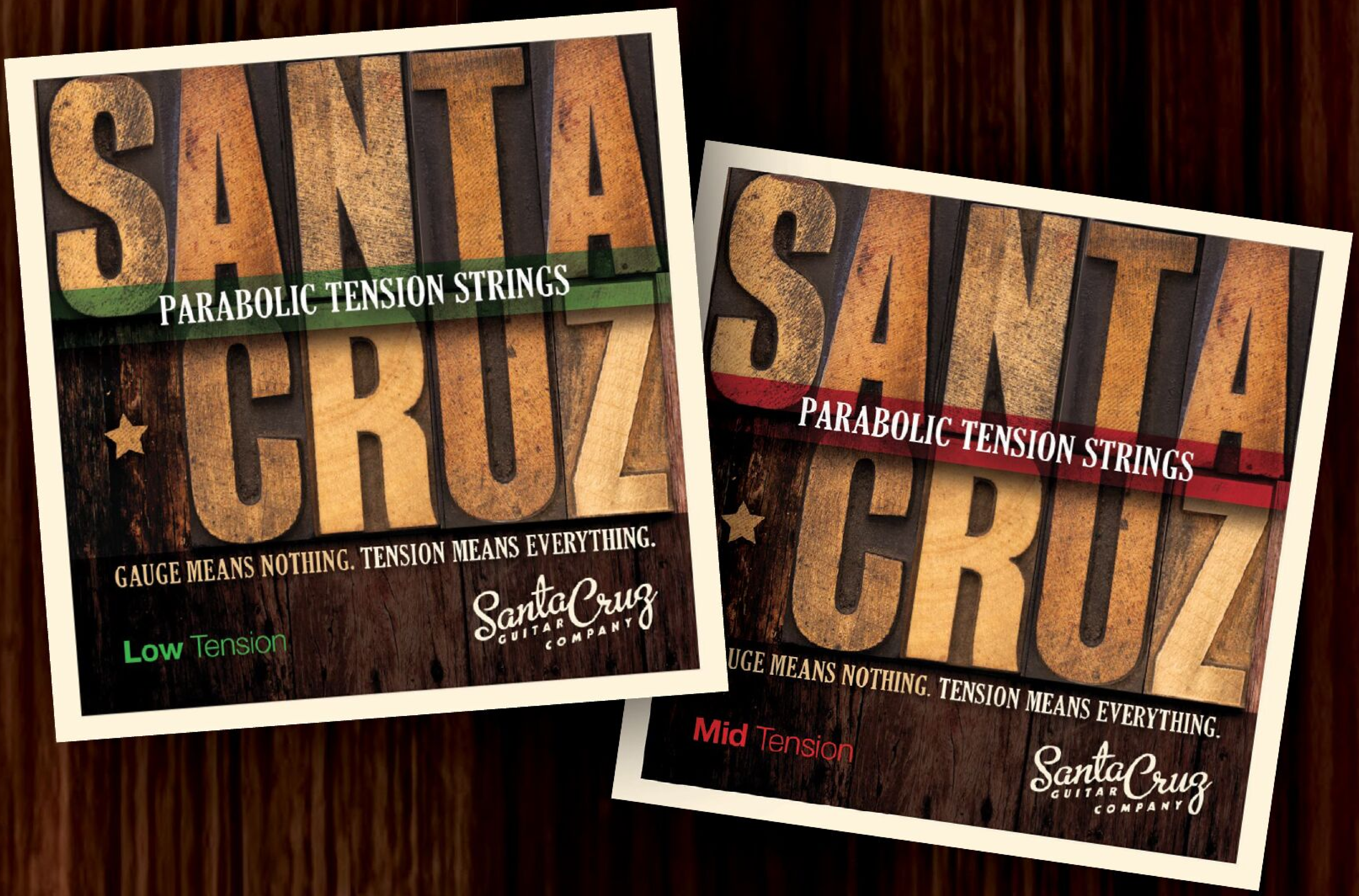

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including a refinished '58 Strat and white '52 Esquire modded with a Gibson humbucker and heard in "Take the Time" and for C-tuned songs in mid-'70s concerts. He used the Junior and Esquire for lead and rhythm respectively on *Bad Company*. In '74, he began favoring a Les Paul Standard, Strats by the late '70s, eventually using five onstage – two in C tuning, two in standard tuning, and one in open G. All had removed whammy bars, blocked bridges, and selector switches that accessed in-between positions. By '79, his collection included '58 and '59 Les Paul Standards, a '58 Flying V, blond '59 ES-335, a Firebird I, and a humbucker-equipped L-5S.

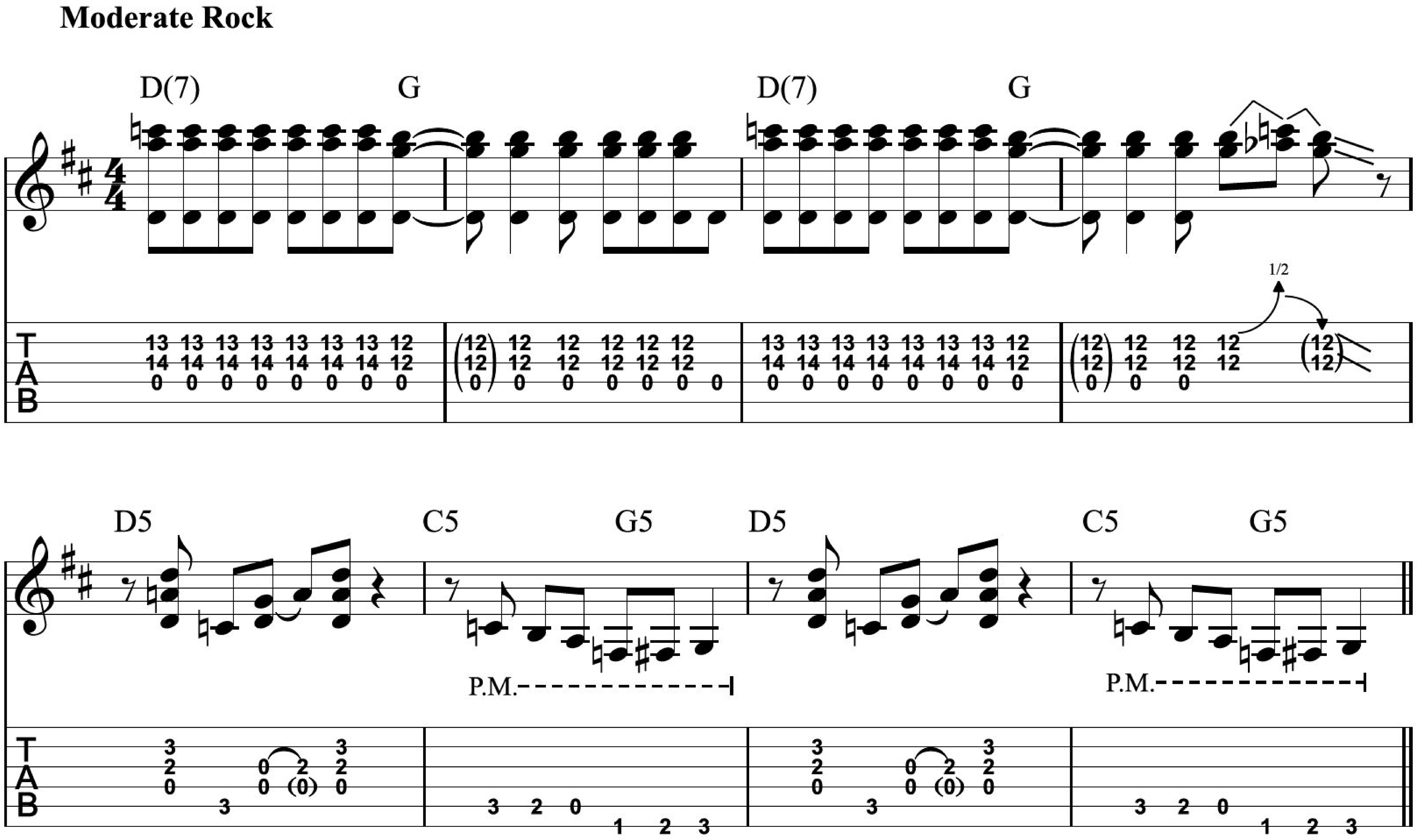
He also had a Jazzmaster, Telecaster bass, Tele with maple board, Tele with Strat neck (once owned by Clapton), Travis Bean, Greco doubleneck, Ibanez Artist, Danaelectro electric sitar, Silvertone amp-in-case, and red National with aluminum neck. His main acoustics were a Martin D-76 Bicentennial and a '30s Gibson parlor, and played Kirke's Ramirez classical for the "Crazy Circles" solo.

He later preferred Custom Shop Les Pauls including a chambered Tom Murphy. He used a .010-.052 Ernie Ball set on most guitars and .009-.042 on open-tuned guitars. He preferred a Herco gold medium pick and attacked with the round end. For slide, he wore a 3" glass bottleneck on the ring finger.

In the mid '60s, Ralphs relied on a pair of Vox AC30 amps, but by '69 upgraded to Marshall 100-watt stacks with Mott. In Bad Company, he used two Marshall stacks driving two 4x12 straight cabs but sometimes alternated with an Ampeg V4 stack in concert ('74). He set the amp's controls to emphasize bass frequencies.

In the studio, he experimented with a Mesa/Boogie for high-gain solos on *Desolation Angels* and plugged his Les Paul into a Fender Bassman feeding a Marshall cabinet on "Holy Water."

Ralphs' classic sound onstage typically came from a Strat plugged into a Roland Boss Chorus (or earlier, an MXR Phase 90 or 100 set a slow speed) and Echoplex with only an occasional use of a wah ("Movin' On"). In the studio, he harnessed a Morley for the Leslie heard effect on "Bad Company."



Two riffs are better than one – an adage evident in the intro of "Deal With the Preacher." This Bad Company excerpt alludes to two key traditions in rock – the catchy Stones/Who pedal-point riff and the late-'60s blues-rock single-note line that became a fixture after the appearance of Cream and Hendrix. The first is depicted with simple D7-G dyads, an open-string affair with characteristic drone quality in bars 1-4. Note the Richards-inspired bent double-stop in 4. The second is exemplified by the contrasting tight riff in 5-8 that combines a John Lee Hooker boogie move on a D5 chord with a funky R&B theme over C5 and G5, appropriately palm-muted and laced with chromaticism.

Wolf Marshall is the founder and original Editor-In-Chief of *GuitarOne* magazine. A respected author and columnist, he has been influential in contemporary music education since the early 1980s. His books include *101 Must-Know Rock Licks*, *B.B. King: the Definitive Collection*, and *Best of Jazz Guitar*, and a list credits can be found at wolfmarshall.com.

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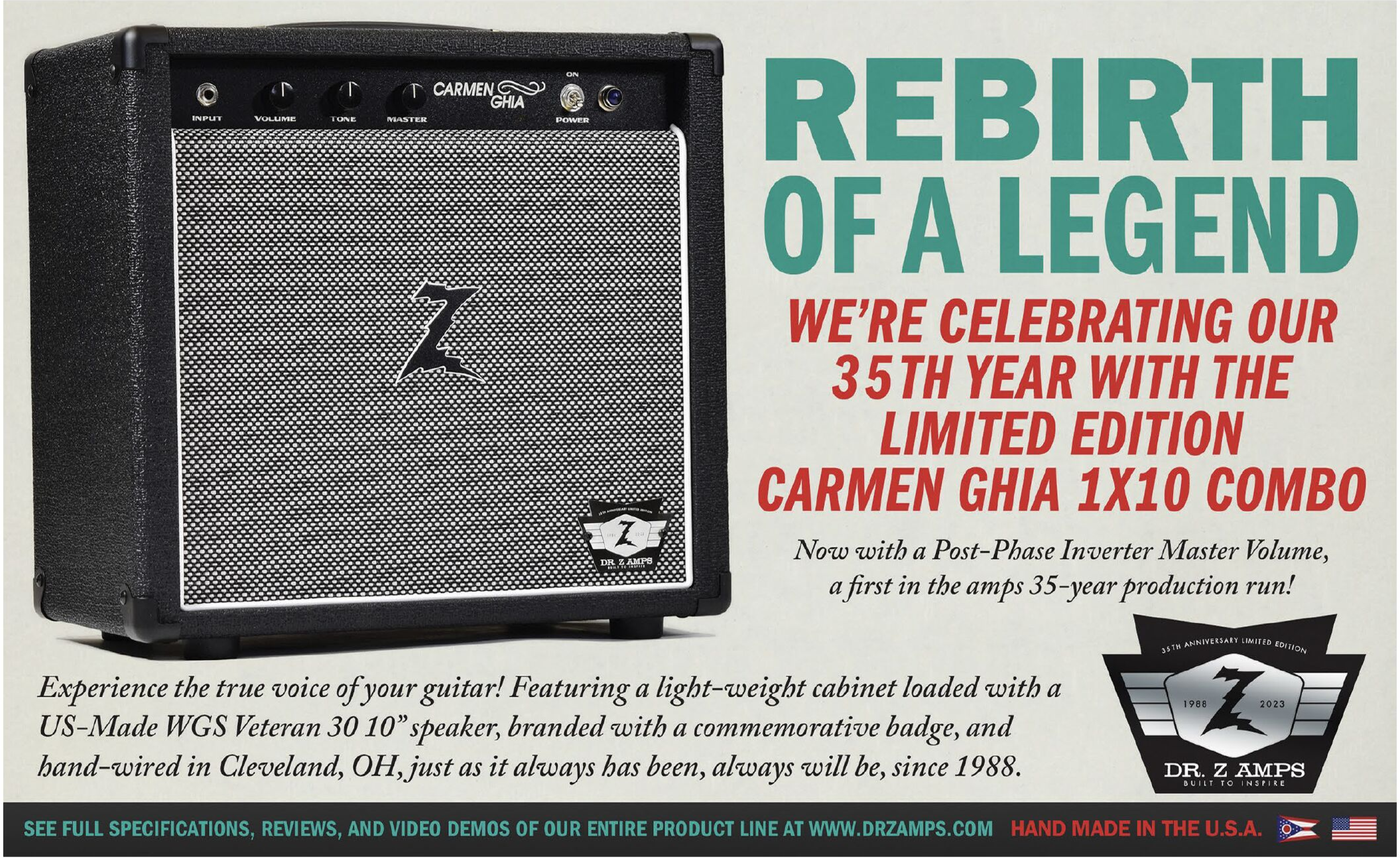
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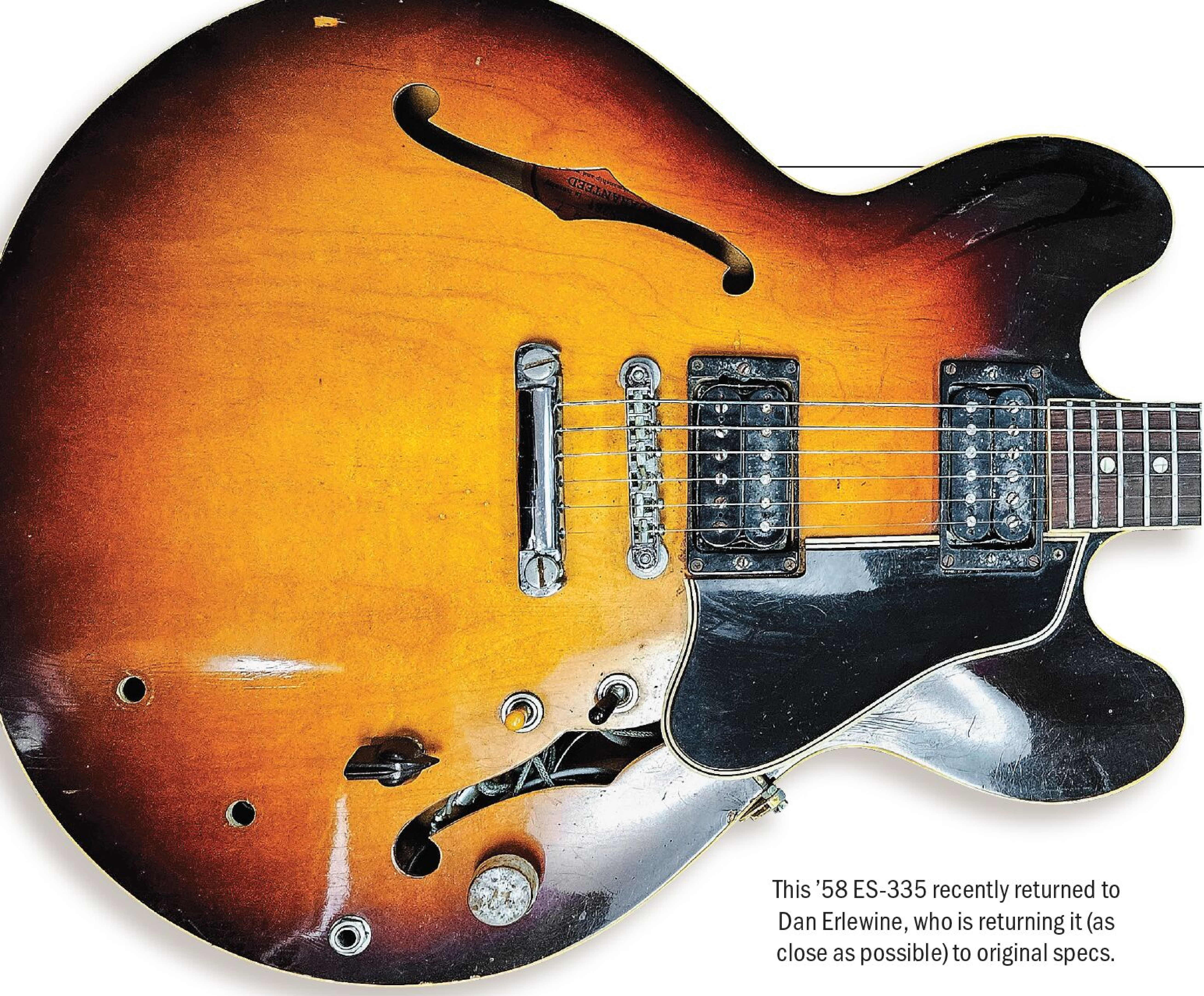


This '58 ES-335 recently returned to Dan Erlewine, who is returning it (as close as possible) to original specs.

WHAT GOES AROUND...

Finding An Old Friend

By Dan Erlewine

I grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where I learned to play guitar during the folk boom that, for me, started with the Kingston Trio in 1959; their music led me to all the great folk and blues musicians that came before them.

In '63, I started playing electric guitar in bands and for the next decade owned, sold, and traded many great ones including a Cherry Red '63 ES-335 that I bought at the Herb David Guitar Studio (where I worked) and used in a rock-and-roll band called The Spiders. I fell behind on payments and had to return the guitar, so I borrowed a Harmony Rocket that I played for a year before The Spiders morphed into the Prime Movers and my brother, Michael, and I bought matching NOS '63 Jazzmasters from Carty's Music in nearby Ypsilanti.

In '65, the Prime Movers became a blues band. After watching my friend (and hero) Michael Bloomfield play his '54 Les Paul goldtop in the Paul Butterfield Blues Band, I traded the Jazzmaster to a friend for his '59 Les Paul Standard.

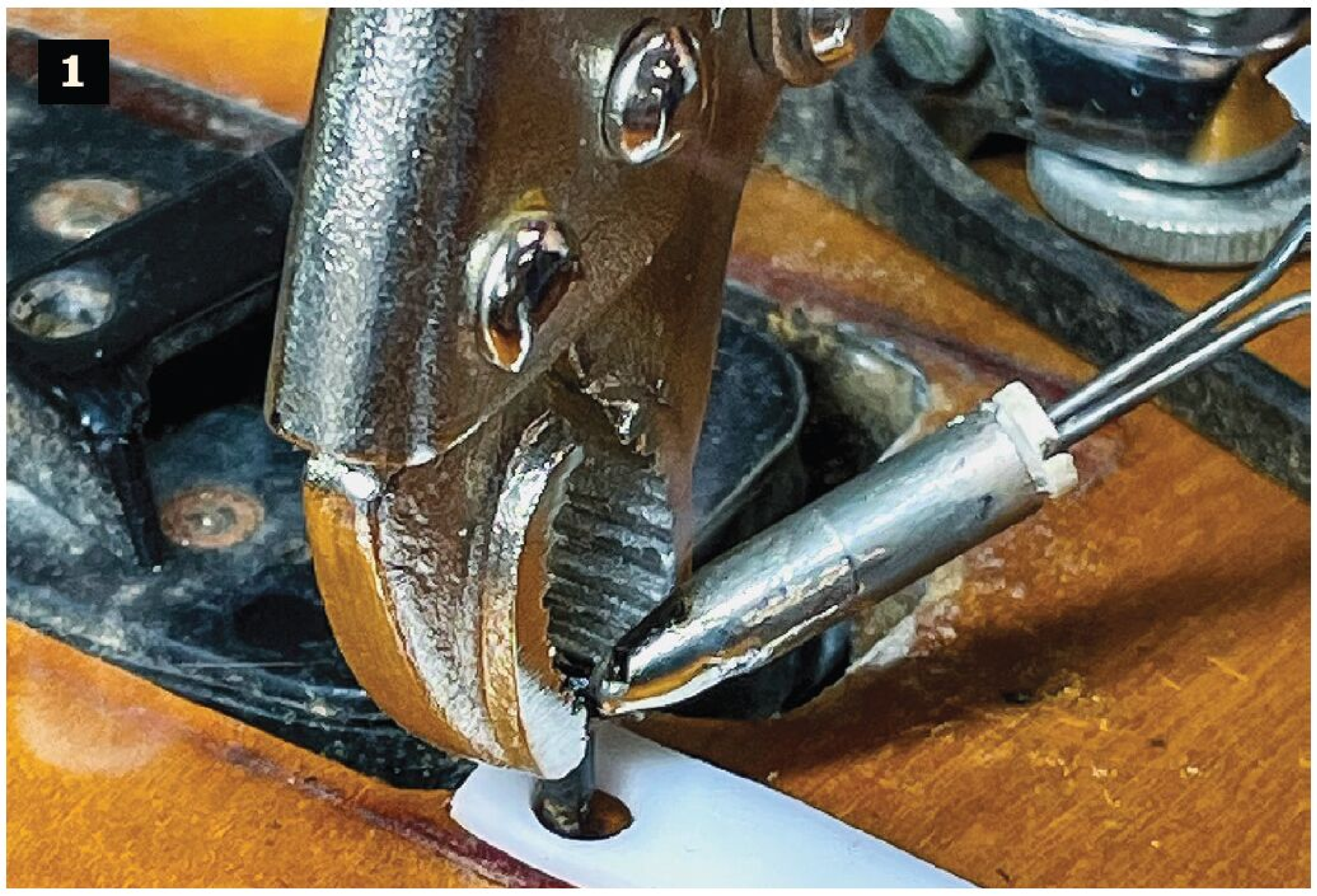
In '67, Michael asked to trade my 'Burst for his goldtop and $125. I couldn't refuse, but I missed the humbucker sound and within a year sold the goldtop to buy a '58 ES-335. Soon after, I had to sell it for rent money; my good friend and neighbor, Al Valusek, gave me $225 and promised that if he ever sold it, I'd get first crack.

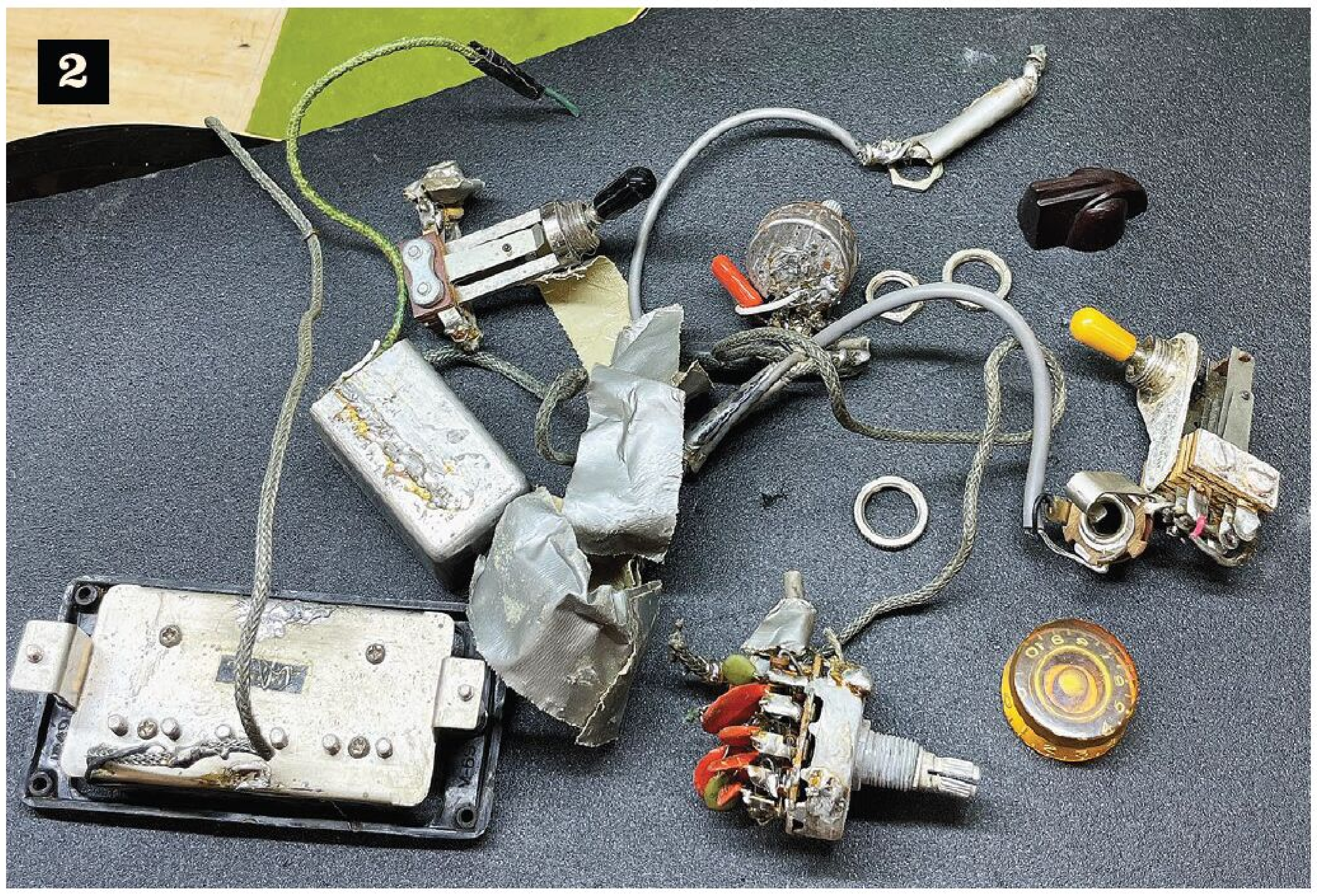
I moved from Ann Arbor in '75, but Al and I kept in touch. "You ready to sell, Al?" I'd say, and he'd answer, "Not yet, buddy, but I won't forget you."

Sadly, Al passed away earlier this year, and I was surprised to learn that he left the 335 to me in his will! Being the experimental type and knowledgeable about guitar electronics, he did a lot of modification including removing the pickup covers, splitting the coils of the bridge pickup, drilling a hole in the top for a coil-tap toggle (which required replacing the original "long" pickguard with a short one), moving the output jack to the top, installing a master Volume, and installing a Varitone. Wanting to return it to original specs, I went to work.

1) The bridge-pickup mounting ring was cracked, warped, and one of its screws was rusted to the body. It was unusable, so I nipped the plastic and put a dab of Tri-Flow on the screw shaft and let it trickle into the hole. After heating it with a soldering iron, I was able to remove it.

2) After removing the knobs, hex nuts, and switch washers, I pulled out all the electronics. The gold "speed" knob was lightly crusted with mold and oxidation, but cleaned up nicely.



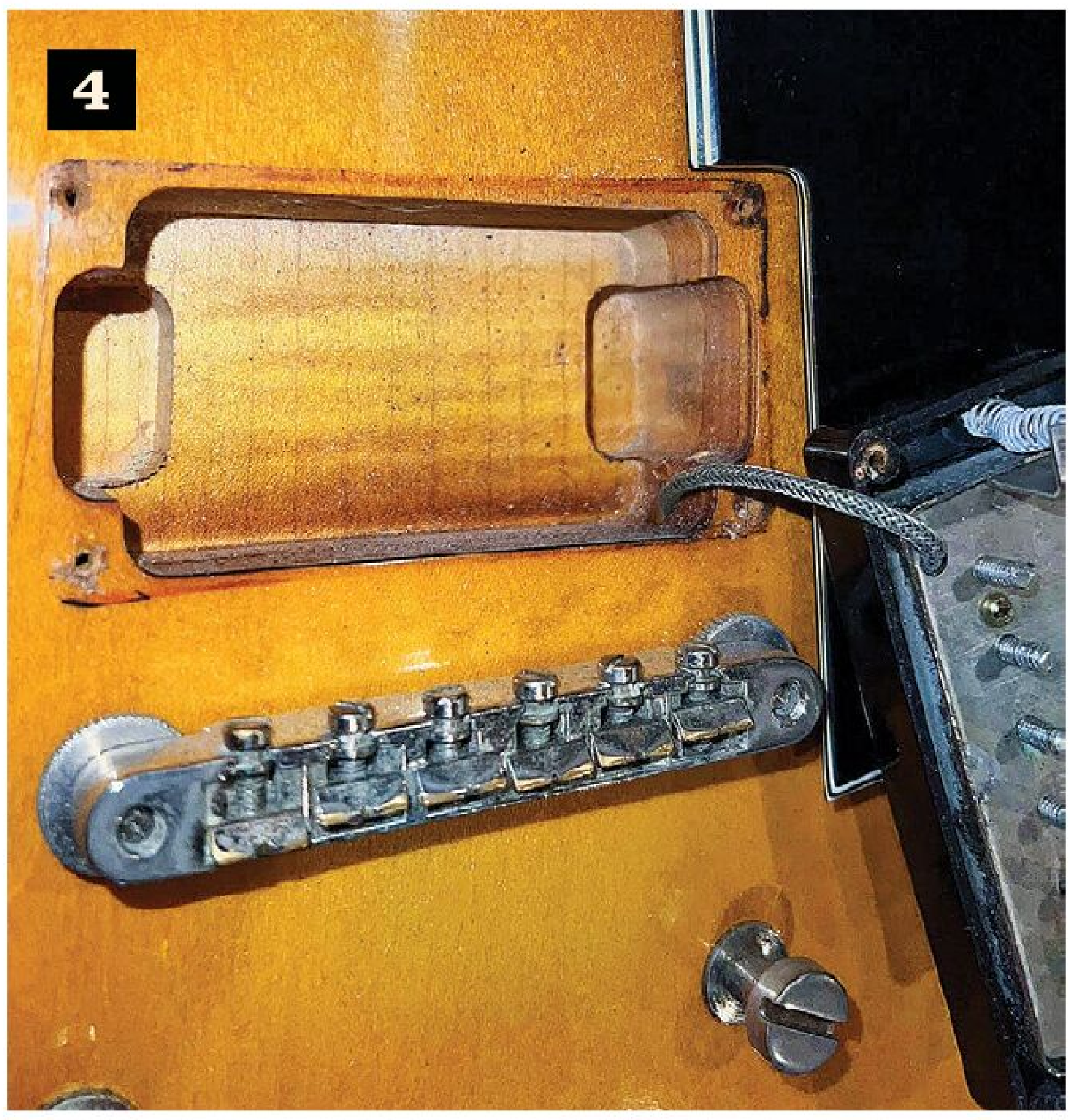


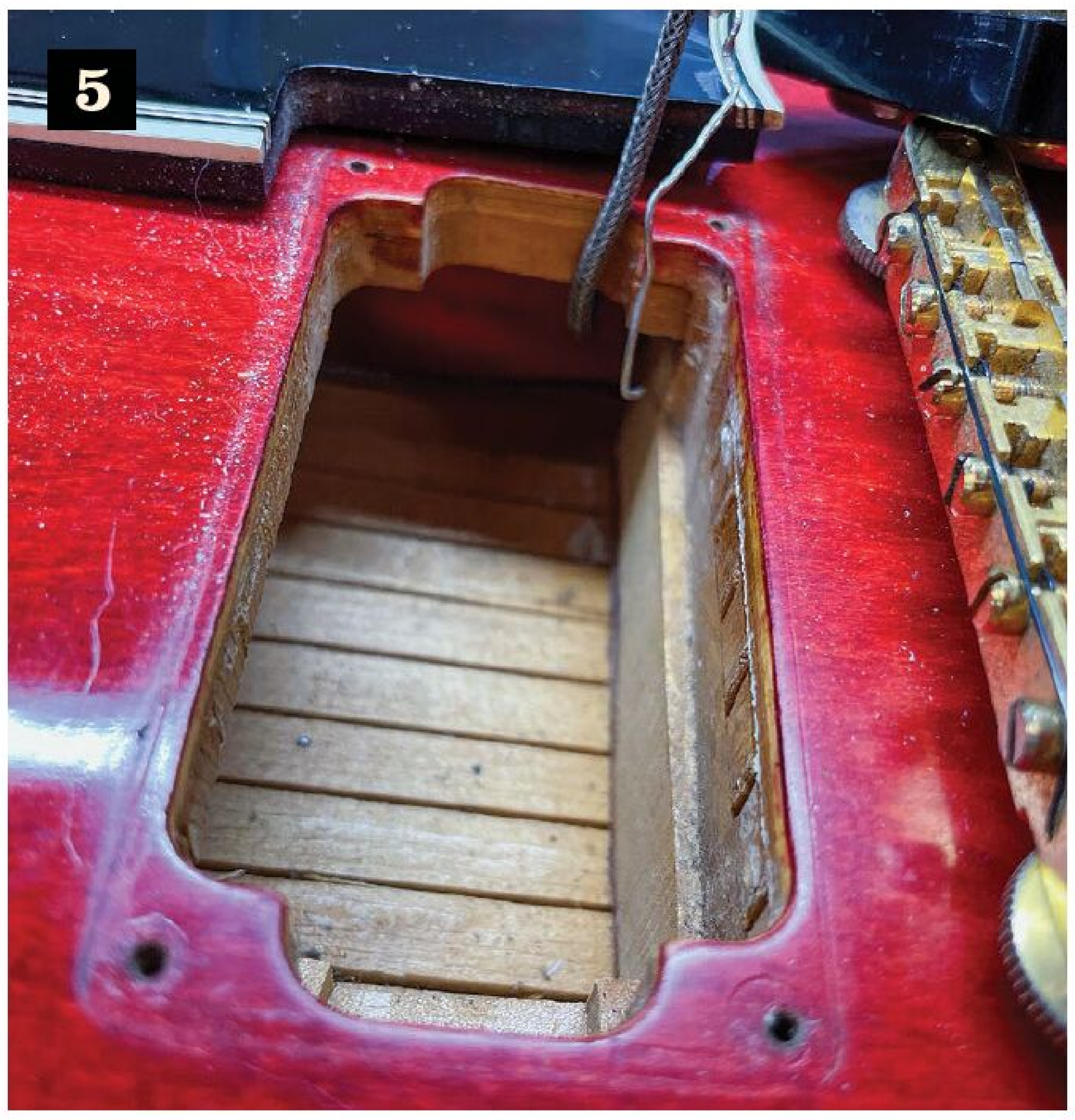
3) Removing the electronics was easy because Al had routed a hole in the bridge-pickup cavity while installing the Varitone and its choke.

4) My friend Kris Blakely sent this photo to help me remember how the rear rout should look. Originally, leads ran through a hole in the cavity and electronics were installed through the treble-side sound hole, then pickup leads and Volume pots were pulled through the f hole

5) Later 335, 345, and 355 models had a larger hole in the bridge cavity like this one, from 1960. The large hole allowed the wiring harness to be installed through the opening, which was especially helpful for the 345 with its Varitone, and the large dust-cover cans on its potentiometers.

6) I wasn't sure if I should fill the hole with





wood or leave it for easier work in the future, but I wanted to clean, flatten, and square the rough routing job. I put the guitar on the milling machine and used a deep-cutting end mill.

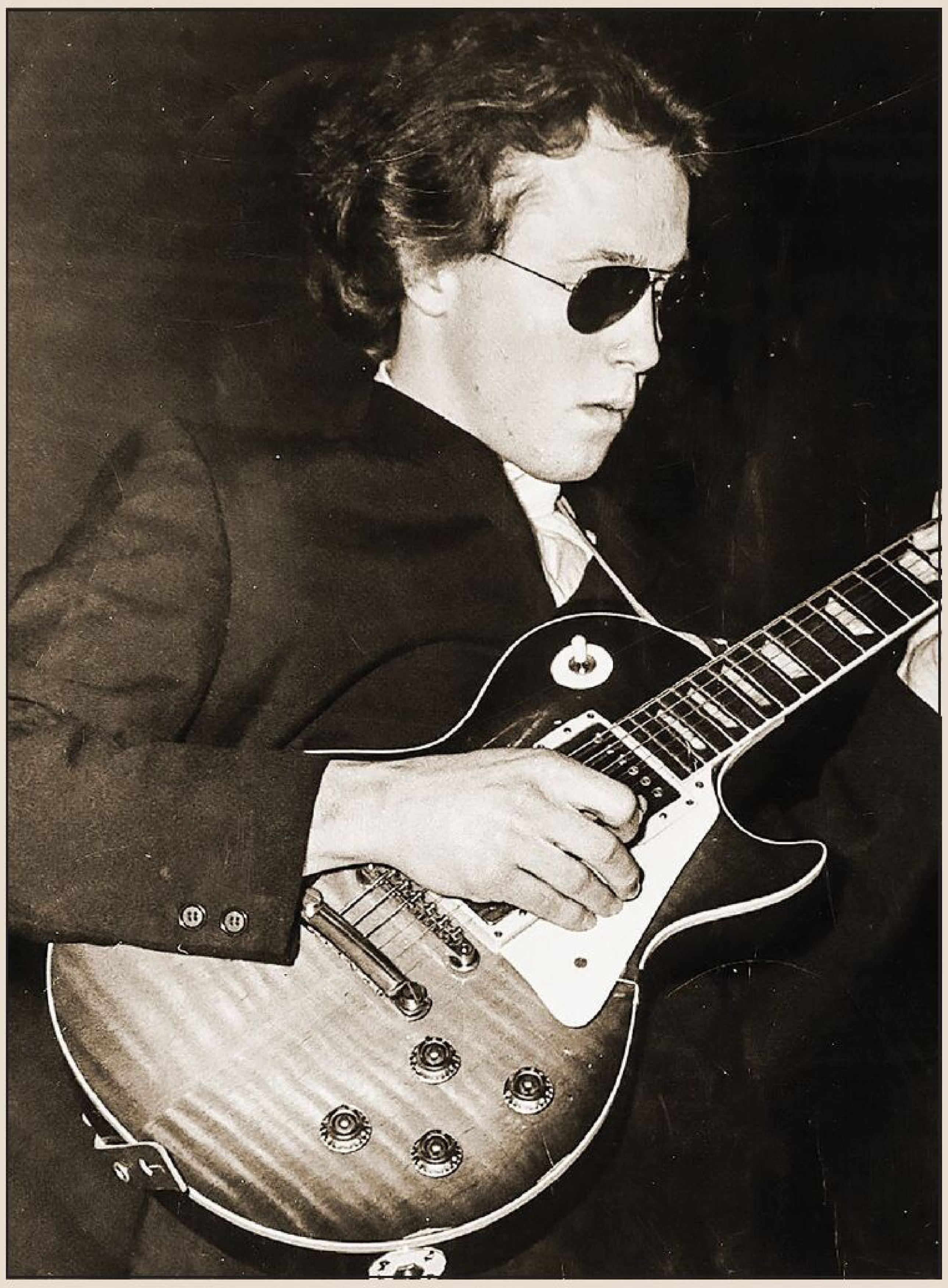
7) I made wooden fillers in case I decided to use them in the hole, but friends in the know say I should leave it as-is.

8) The treble-side binding was loose, so I carefully removed it and spent more than an hour scraping old rubber cement from an earlier repair. Rubber cement isn't a good choice for this type of repair. I use fish glue, which works well bonding celluloid to wood and is easy to clean up.

9) The glue side of the binding also needed cleaning, which I did with a smooth-mill file. The leftover brown is stain leached from the rosewood fretboard by the solvent in the glue; the binding itself is clean.

10) As with the bridge-pickup rout, I was unsure what to do with the hole for the coil-tap toggle. My choices were to fill it with wood and airbrush it with lacquer or fill it with a pearl dot, like Gibson used to do in in Kalamazoo. I went with the latter, and our intern, Ceil, took the idea a bit further by putting a brass bushing with a pearl center on the lathe and press-fitting it into the hole. It looks classy! Next month, we'll finish the job.

Dan Erlewine has been repairing guitars for more than 50 years. The author of three books, dozens of magazine articles, he has also produced instructional videotapes and DVDs on guitar repair. From 1986 through his retirement in late 2019, Erlewine was part of the R&D team and company liaison for Stewart-MacDonald's Guitar Shop Supply. Today, he operates a repair shop in Athens, Ohio, and builds replicas of the guitars he made for Albert King and Jerry Garcia in 1972. This column has appeared in *VG* since March, 2004. You can contact him at danerlewine@gmail.com.



Dan Erlewine with the Prime Movers in '65 (top left), circa '66 onstage with his (later Michael Bloomfield's) '59 Les Paul Standard, with the '54 goldtop he got from Bloomfield in trade for the 'Burst, and in '68 with the '58 ES-335.

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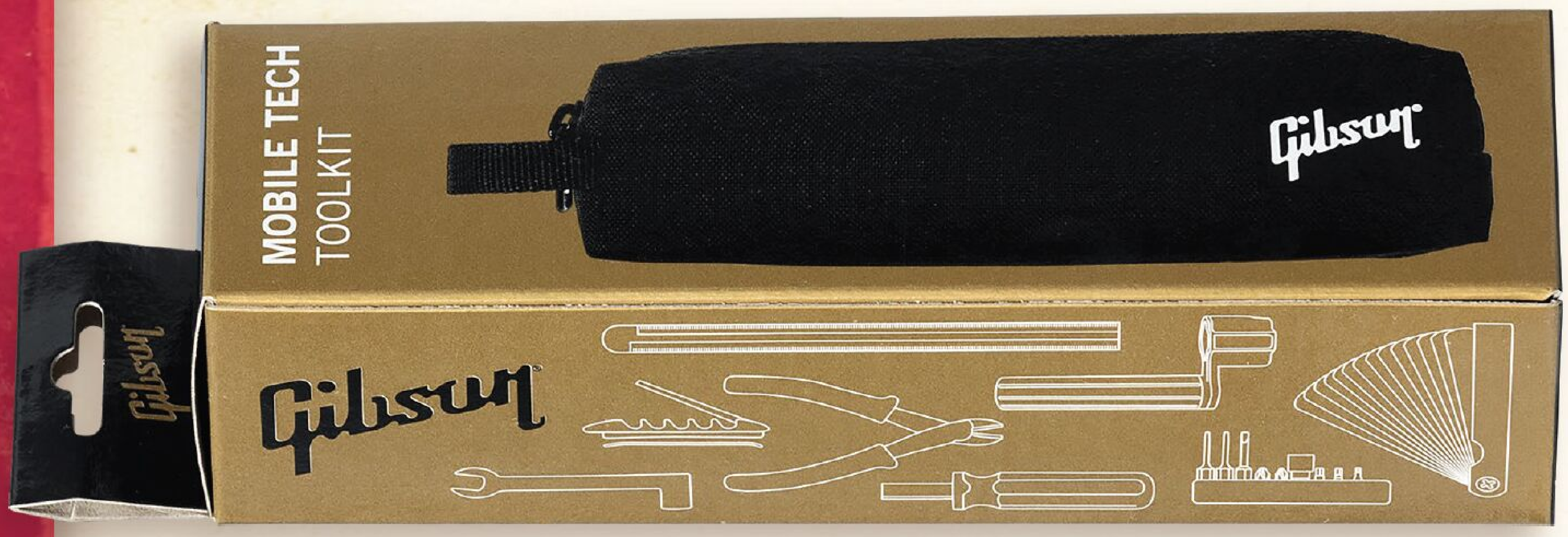

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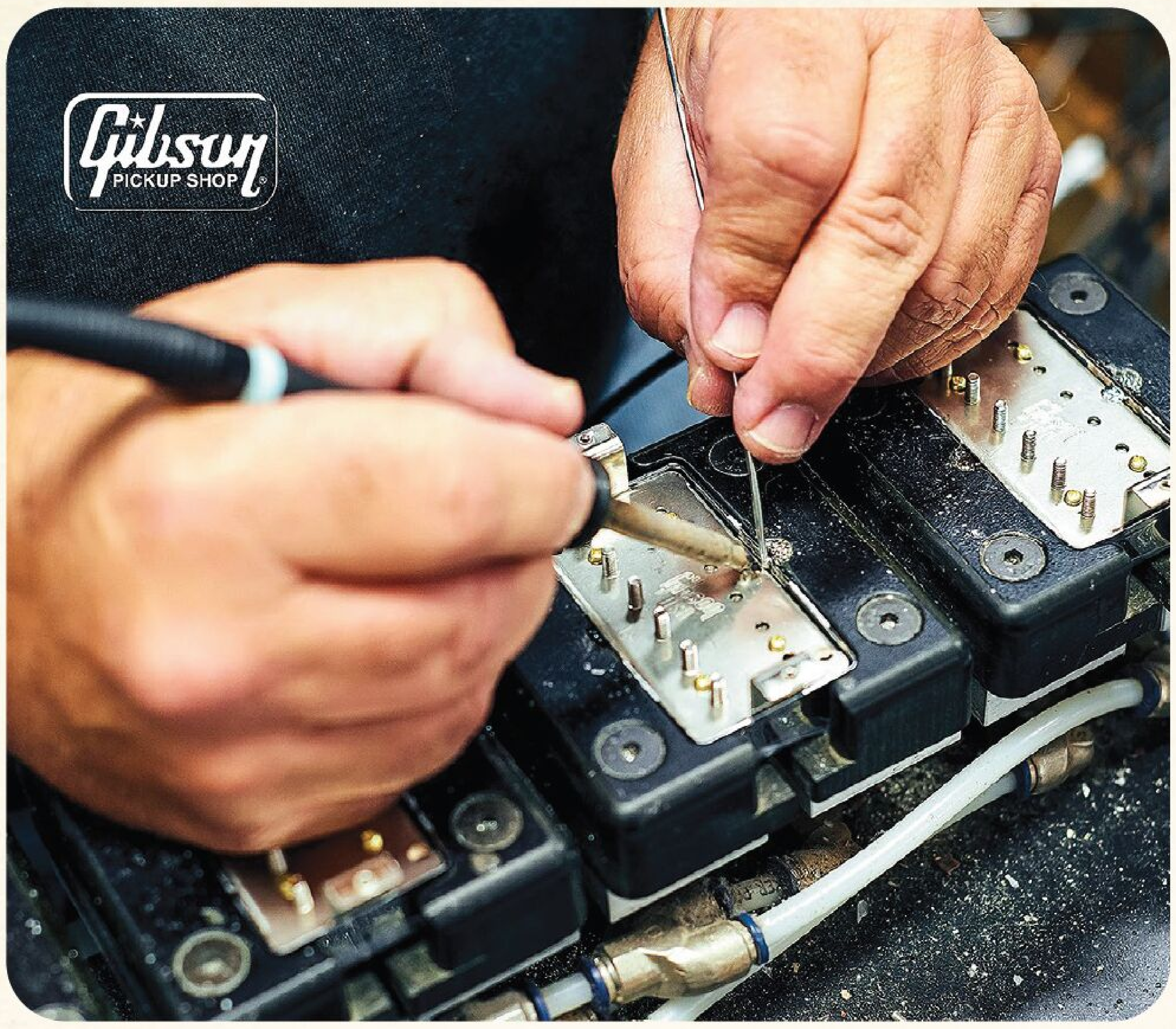

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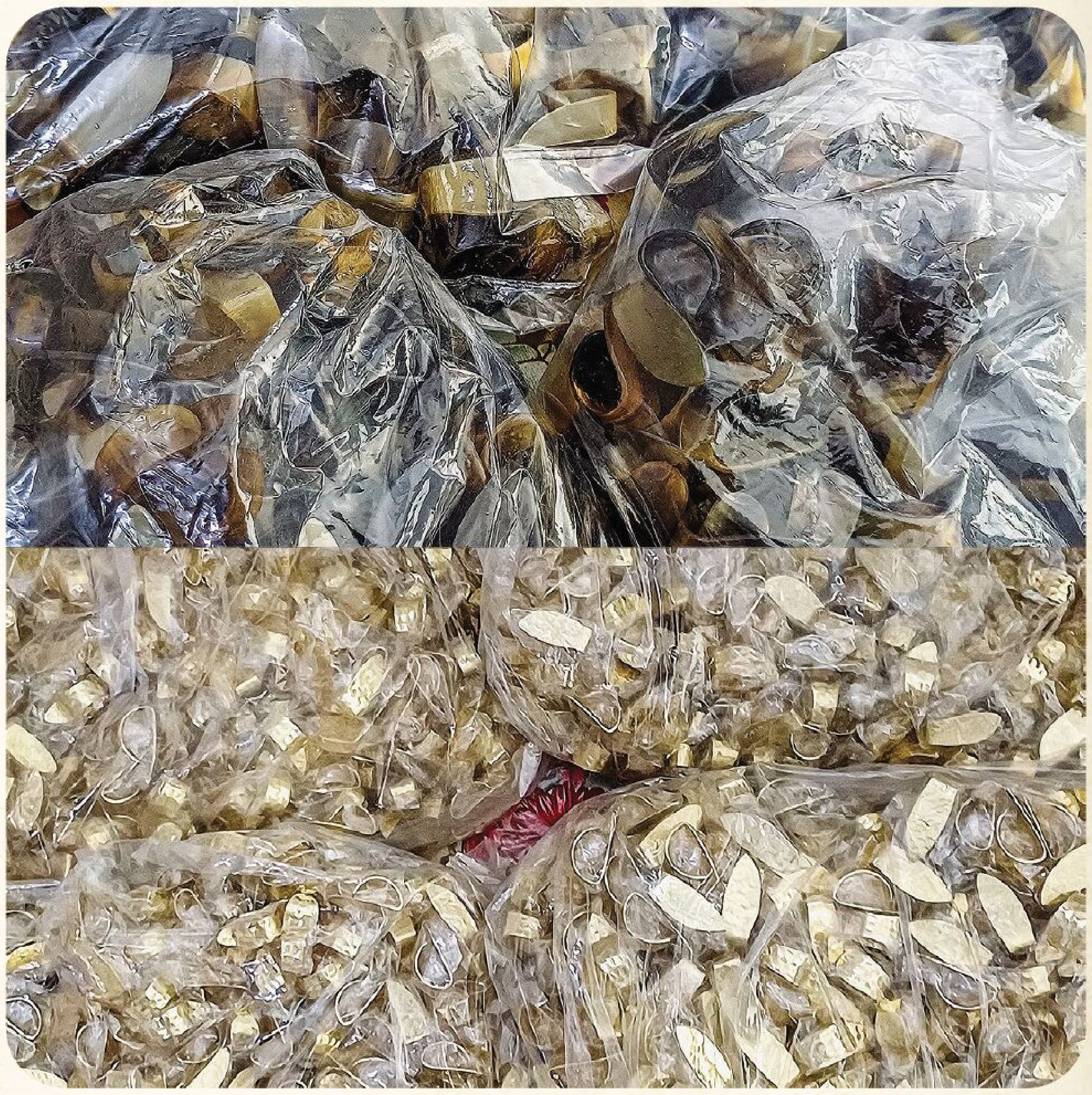

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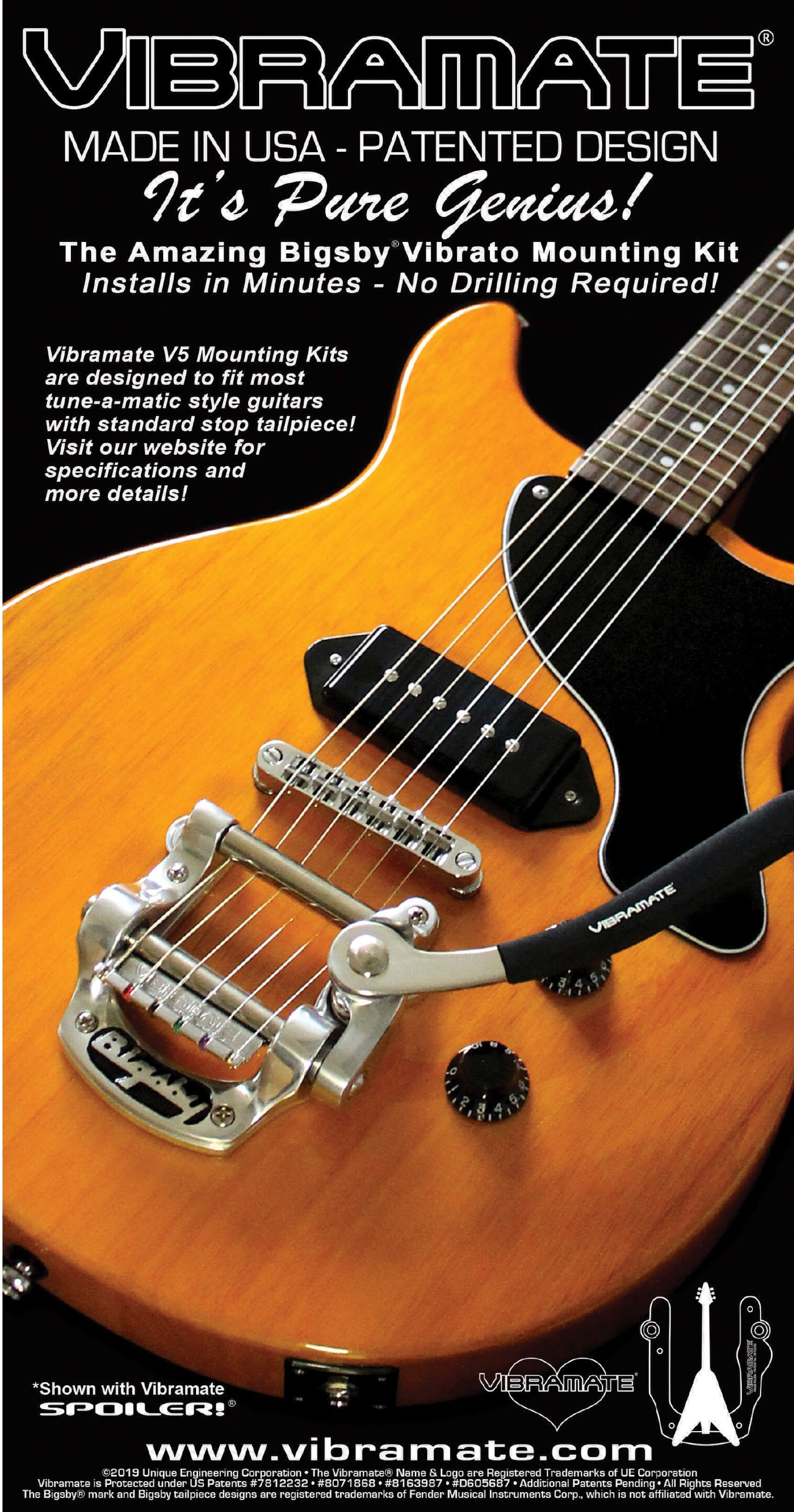


WARREN HAYNES
PEACE, LOVE, & ROCK & ROLL

BY OSCAR JORDAN

Warren Haynes and his Gov't Mule crew aren't the kind of guys to let something like a pandemic slow them down. During the height of the Covid lockdown, they hauled a ton of gear to a studio and recorded not one album, but two. Heavy Load Blues and Peace… Like A River show the band in fighting shape with strong songs, stellar playing, incredible sounds, and a few special guests. Peace… Like A River is the most-ambitious project Gov't Mule has ever done, and Haynes can't wait for everyone to hear it.

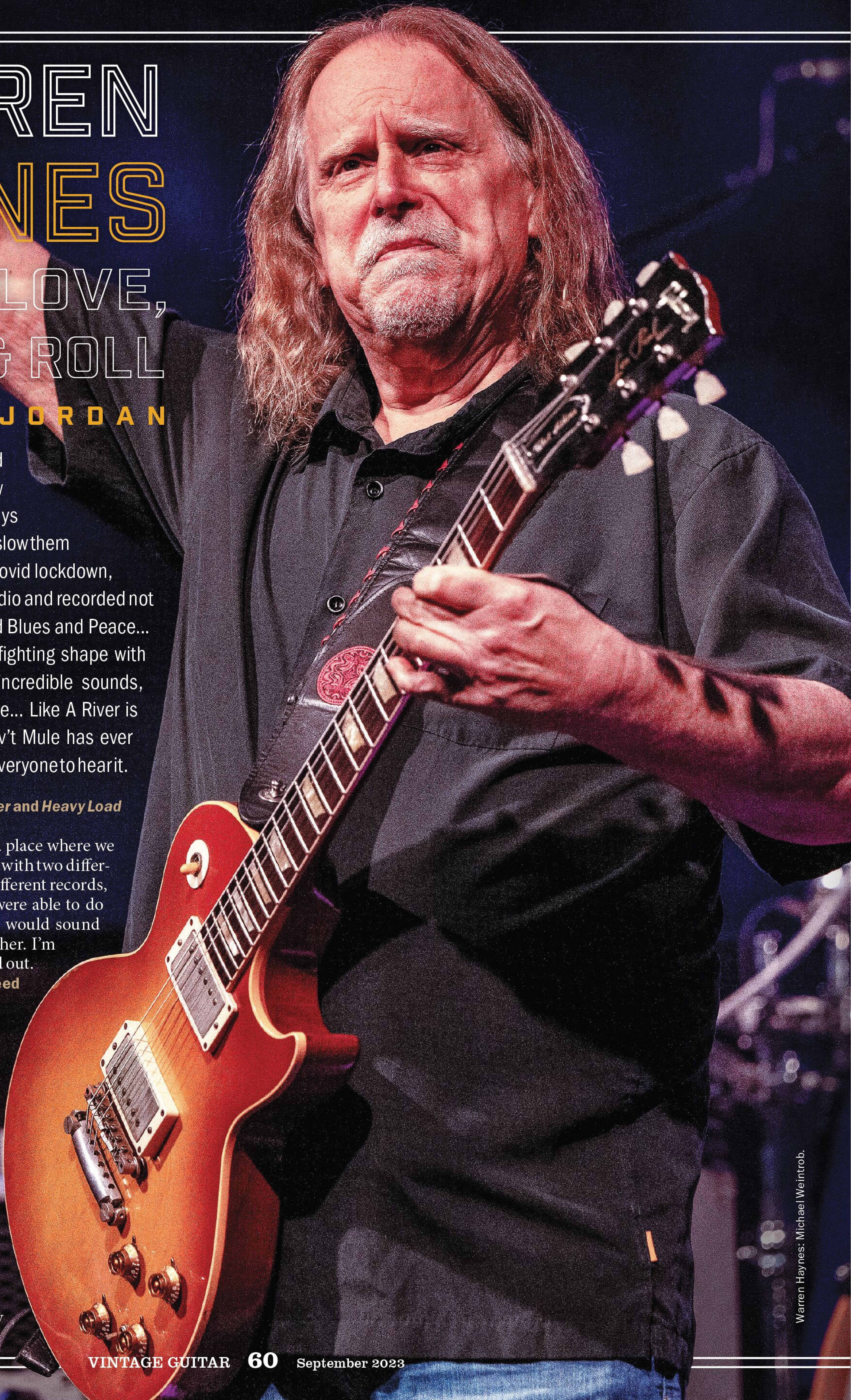
You recorded *Peace… Like A River* and *Heavy Load Blues* at the same time.

We made a mission of finding a place where we could set up in two different rooms with two different sets of equipment, make two different records, and bounce back and forth. We were able to do that in a way where both records would sound completely different from each other. I'm really happy with the way it turned out.

Were you concerned they'd bleed into each other?

Our concern from the beginning was to make sure that didn't happen. But everything fell into place. The two rooms were side by side but completely different. For the blues record, we set up all these small vintage amplifiers in a small room with a low ceiling, a small drum kit, an organ, piano, and a little bass amp. I sang through a couple of distorted mics and was listening through a monitor with no headphones.

For *Peace… Like A River,* we were set up in the big room with all of our normal gear with a really



Warren Haynes: Michael Weintrob.

high ceiling. The plan was to come in around noon and work on *Peace… Like A River* until nine, then a break and play blues for the rest of the night. It allowed us to clear our heads at the end of the day and stop thinking. Working on *Peace… Like A River*, there was a lot of thinking, a lot of arrangements, meticulous instrumental sections, and a lot of stuff to remember. On *Heavy Load Blues*, we'd shut our brains off and have a good time. It was an awesome formula. I'm not sure I'd recommend it for the future, but as far as what we needed during lockdown, it was the perfect remedy.

Gov't Mule: Matt Abts, Danny Louis, Warren Haynes, Jorgen Carlsson.

What's with the album's title?

I noticed when I was going through all the lyrics, the words "Peace" and "River" seemed to be repeated many times throughout the songs. I thought it would be cool to come up with a title that reflected that. We were having a conversation during dinner one night, and our engineer asked, "What's your favorite Paul Simon song?" I said, "I don't know. There's so many." I thought "Sounds Of Silence" because that's the first one I fell in love with when I was seven years old. He said, "Mine is 'Peace Like a River.'" I was like, "Oh! I don't know that song... Let's listen to it!" We listened and thought about covering it, which we never did.

Then we realized there was a book that predated the song, so I researched that. It seemed like what I was trying to say, lyrically, seemed to be summed up by that phrase. It was one of those kismet situations. After what everybody has been through over the last three or four years, inner peace is what we need more than anything.

You have a few special guests sharing that sentiment.

It was cool to have guests involved with this record because all of them fit the songs so well. When I think about Ivan Neville and Ruthie Foster on "Dreaming Out Loud," my initial thought was the song had a Sly & The Family Stone vibe, and I envisioned a situation where there were several lead singers that shared vocal parts throughout the song, which is what I always dug about Sly. Ivan and Ruthie both sang on my solo record, *Man In Motion*. They're both great singers, and our voices blend well, so that was great. And, of course, having Billy Bob Thornton doing crazy spoken word on "The River Only Flows One Way" was a perfect fit. Billy Gibbons singing on "Shake Our Way Out" was the perfect finishing touch because that song had a ZZ Top influence. Billy and I have been doing a lot of stuff recently. It only took a quick phone call to ask, "Hey, you feel like joining in on this?" He did, of course, and it completes the picture.

I didn't know [guitarist/singer] Celisse prior to working with her for this album. I discovered her through watching Youtube videos. She's such a cool guitar player, singer, and persona. I realized I wanted a female gospel-type voice for "Just Across The River." She popped into my mind, and it turns out we'd done a benefit together in New York. It all fell into place.

"The River Only Flows One Way" has a hip reggae feel.

That track turned out great. Danny Louis played keyboards, trombone, and trumpet, and he's shining throughout that tune. That song is going to be interesting live because I think it'll change complexion on a nightly basis. It'll be a lot of fun to explore.

What was it like recording with Billy Bob Thornton?

It was cool. He has his own studio, and we hung out quite a few times. We've been friends for quite a few years, and we wrote a tune together recently. When I was thinking about "The River Only Flows One Way," I wanted the verses to be spoken-word, like beat poetry but with a dark and twisted narrator. There were only a handful of people I'd think about for that kind of thing, and I thought, "Billy Bob would be great. Let me call him and see if he's got time to do it." Man, he just knocked it out of the park. He has a strong presence.

Did you watch "Goliath"?

I'm a big fan of that show. Have you seen "1883?" He plays Sheriff Jim Courtright and has the line, "If you wanna dance with the girls, dance with the girls. If you wanna drink at the bar, drink at the bar. But if anybody here fancies himself a gunman, you're in the wrong town. There's only one killer in Fort Worth, and that's me." Then he shoots 14 people (laughs). I'm a huge fan of his work. I dig his music thing, as well. He's very passionate about that side of his career, and it was just cool to bring him into the fold.

Did Billy Gibbons play guitar on "Shake Our Way Out?"

When we did "Broke Down on the Brazos" for *By a Thread*, he just played, so we swapped it around for this, and he just sang. His presence is felt throughout the track. When we added Billy, Celisse, Ivan, and Ruthie to the project, the music was finished. I felt a little regretful that we weren't able to include them from a playing standpoint because they're all such great players, so I guess we'll have to do that in the future.

It boggles the mind to imagine two rooms packed with all your guitar gear (laughs).

We brought a semi-truck full of gear because the studio was close to my house, so we didn't only bring normal gear we'd take to any Mule session, we also brought a truck from my house and a bunch of old gear I haven't used in a long time, or in some cases never recorded with. There was so much gear; it was almost too much. We had to figure out where to put all the cases, and a lot of them lived outdoors. It was a lesson in strategy, figuring out how to keep everything out of the way. It was great because we were in the studio longer than we normally would be, and it gave us a chance not only to

Gov't Mule: Shervin Lainez.

experiment with a ton of guitars and amps we wouldn't usually have access to, but we went through the process to see if everything was working. It had been such a long time since the vintage gear had been used.

Did gear overlap between records?

It was completely different, almost across the board – different guitars, different amps, different keyboards, and different basses. For the blues record, Matt Abts had a stripped-down vintage drum kit, then for the main record, he had his big new multi-tom kit. Matt had been playing fewer tom-toms, and now he's got five or six going again. And that big room gave us a lot of miking opportunities.

One of the things that did overlap was my '59 Les Paul, which I used on a few songs on each album. Other than that, it was a completely different setup. In the big room, I had 100-watt heads and 4x12 cabs, but I *usually* mix a small amp with big amps. There were two small Alessandro amps that we blended in with my Marshall, Homestead, Diaz, Soldano, or whatever big amps I was using. I'd usually blend in one of the Alessandros. On the blues record, there were a lot of Supros, Gibson Skylarks, tweed Champs, Gibson Vanguards, and stuff like that. I'm very happy with the way it turned out, sonically.

Do you use your signature Les Paul much?

I played my signature model probably more than any other guitar. That's the one I'm most comfortable with. I have several I play onstage, and I know how to maneuver them.

Which other guitars see the most action?

I also played my blond 335 quite a bit, but there was a lot of experimentation; there were some Firebirds and I even played a Tele on a couple of tunes to get a different sound. There are a lot of different sounds on this record.

How about acoustics?

I played Danny Louis' Gibson Hummingbird on a couple of tunes. I think it's a 1970, and it records *really* well. I also had a couple of Allen Woody's acoustics – one was a Gibson 12-string I played on a couple of tunes. I'm not sure what year it is, but it's gorgeous.

Did you write in the studio, or come in with songs ready to go?

The first seven or eight days, we just set up and rehearsed. We wound up writing "Long Time Coming" and "After The Storm." Those were written in the studio. In both cases, I was sitting in the control room while Matt and Danny were in the cutting room, jamming on what turned out to be the main motif for those tunes. I started writing lyrics while they were jamming. When they took a break, I went out and said, "Hey, I think these are going to turn into a song." They grew up from the floor upward. Both turned out cool.

Normally, we would arrange and rehearse during sound checks on tour. But we weren't on tour, so we couldn't travel or be together; Danny and I are on the East Coast, Jorgen and Matt are on the West Coast. So, we needed seven or eight days of rehearsal to get the songs where they needed to be before we started recording. But also to get ourselves back into fighting shape because it had been so long since we had played together at that point.

When you get together, are you having fun, or is it, "Let's get to work?"

It's a little of both. There's a lot of jamming to get back into the spirit and back into shape, especially the first few days. There's a lot of "Let's see what happens," and jamming for the fun of it. That carried throughout the process, especially in the beginning. We didn't want to rush. We needed to be somewhere for a long period of time, so when things started feeling right, we'd start rolling tape – but not before. It turned out to be the right recipe.

How were you able to maintain the theme from song to song?

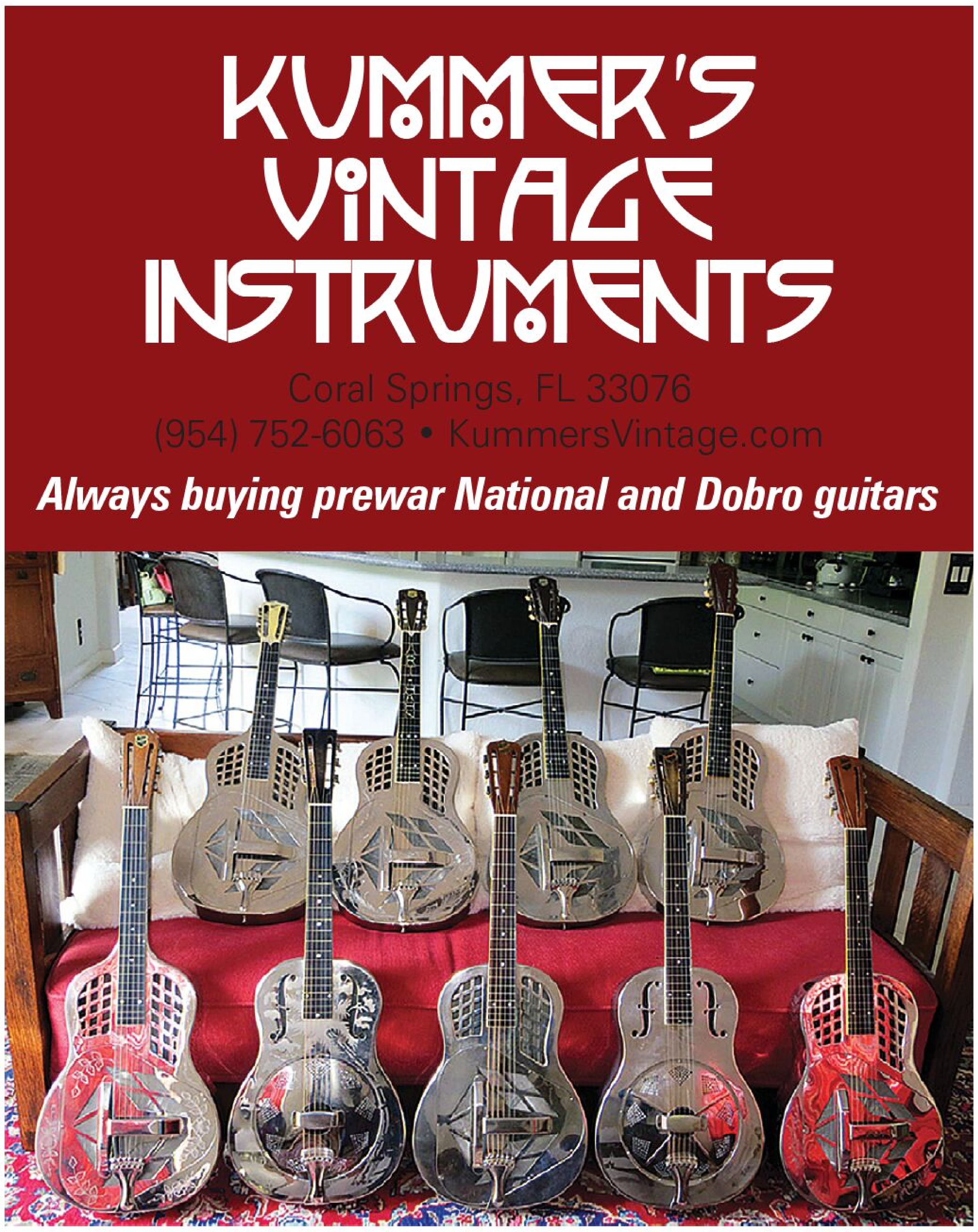
I felt like this album was the follow-up to *Revolution Come… Revolution Go*. I don't think of it as the follow-up to *Heavy Load Blues* because blues stands on its own. My mindset had changed so much that I found myself from a lyrical standpoint, not wanting to get bogged down in the negative side of being locked down during Covid. I wanted to explore the bright side of the future, personal relationships, and things that mean the most to us. Even to the point that I felt we needed some songs like "Shake Our Way Out" and "Head Full Of Thunder" that have a sense of humor and aren't the normal part of the overall concept. They're feel-good rock songs. It felt like we needed a few of those as well. They tie in, obviously, but "Shake Our Way Out" is a humorous take on a fictitious character that's picking up someone in a bar during Covid. Not from my own personal experience, obviously, but it had to be a precarious notion (laughs). "Head Full Of Thunder" is about a guy ending a tormenting relationship, but again, it's a humorous outlook.

They all tie together in their own way, and I love the fact that there are quite a few genres of music, from an influence standpoint. It's by and large a rock and roll record, but covers a lot of ground, stylistically.

You have so much great material. How do you choose songs for the tour?

It's a good problem to have, but I want to play as much of the new material as possible. Every show is different, so it'll be cool to give some of the old songs a break. It will also be cool to think of every show as a challenge from a setlist standpoint. **VG**

Warren Haynes: Shervin Lainez.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Big Al's Lake County Musician's Swap Meet, 2024 at Renninger's Florida Twin Markets, 20651 Hwy 441 Mt. Dora FL. Hours 8-3 For more info contact Allen at info@lcmsm.com, (352)735-0025 or visit www. lcmsm.com September 10, November 12, 2023 and January 14, March 10, May 12 , 2024.

AUGUST

Saratoga Springs Guitar Show, Sunday August 13, 2023 form noon to 4pm at the Saratoga Springs City Center, 522 Broadway, Saratoga Springs NY. For more info call Peter Occhineri (860) 983-6774, email – NortheastGuitarExpo@gmail.com

SEPTEMBER

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 16-17, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

The Kalamazoo Music Instrument Swap, Sunday September 17th at the Kalamazoo County Expo Center, 2900 Lake St., Kalamazoo, MI 49048 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

Seattle-Tacoma Guitar Show, Sunday September 17th, 2023; 9:30am-3:30pm at Kent Commons, 525 4th Ave N, Kent, WA 98030. Contact: bruceadolph@mac.com westcoastguitarshows.com

Rockford Guitar Show, Saturday, September 23, 2023 - 10am-3pm at the Tebala Event Center 7910 Newburg Rd Rockford IL 61108. $5 at the door. More info at www.rockfordguitarshow.com **(See Advertisement on page 64.)**

The Indiana Guitar Show, September 23-24, at the Hendricks County Fairgrounds 1900 E. Main St. Danville, IN. For more information contact Eddie at (317) 272-5222 or visit www.theindianaguitarshow.com **(See Advertisement on page 64.)**

Riverhead Guitar Show, September 30 - October 1 from 9am-5pm at the Twin Forks Brewery, 807 Raynor Ave, Riverhead NY 11901. For more information contact Kevin at strat1960@aol.com **(See Advertisement on page 66.)**

LA Amp Show, September 30 to October 1 at the Airtel Plaza Hotel, 7277 Valjean Ave, Van Nuys CA. Contact Loni Specter 818-517-8247

OCTOBER

33rd Annual Chicago Vintage Guitar Expo, Sunday, October 1st 2023 9am-3pm at the Holiday Inn, 1000 Busse Rd, Elk Grove Village, Il 60007. For more info Contact Beverly Bakes, R&B Productions at 847-931-0707 or Bakesguitar@aol.com

Southern Ohio Guitar Show Sunday, October 15 from 11am – 4pm at the Yoctangee Park Armory, Tritscheller Rd. Chillicothe, OH. For more information visit www.sohioguitarshow.com **(See Advertisement on page 64.)**

Woodstock Invitational Luthier's Showcase, October 13-15, 2023, at the Bearsville Center Woodstock NY. For more info go to www.WoodstockInvitational.com

Guitarlington 2023, October 21-22 at the Arlington Convention Center, 1200 Ballpark Way, Arlington TX. For more info contact Ruth Brinkmann (817) 312-7659 ruthmbrinkmann@gmail.com, Larry Briggs (918) 288-2222 larryb@stringswest.com, Dave Crocker (417) 850-4751 davelcrocker@gmail.com, Fax 817-592-3381 www.amigoguitarshows.com **(See Advertisement on page 65.)**

NOVEMBER

Great American Guitar Show (Fall Philly), November 4-5 at the Greater Philadelphia Expo Center – Hall A, 100 Station Ave., Oaks, PA. For more info contact Bee 3 Vintage at (828) 298-2197 or visit www.bee3vintage.com.

The Ann Arbor Music Instrument Swap, Sunday, November 5th at Weber's Inn, 3050 Jackson Ave, Ann Arbor, MI 48103 from 10am - 4pm. For more information contact Shawn VanSteeland at 517-410-6409 or at info@musicinstrumentswap.com

2024

JANUARY

Winter Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, January 7, 2024 at the Makoy Center 5462 Center St, Hilliard, OH 43026 Show hours 11:30-5:00. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351.
guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

Amigo SoCal World Guitar Show, January 27-28, 2024, OC Fair & Event Center, Arlington & Fairview St., Costa Mesa, CA. For more info call Larry at (918) 288-2222,
amigoshows@stringswest.com, www.amigoguitarshows.com.

FEBRUARY

Orlando International Guitar & Music Expo, February 2-4, 2024 at the Central Florida Fairgrounds, 4603 West Colonial Drive, Orlando, FL. Public

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MARCH

Sarasota Guitar and Amp Show, March 8th - 12pm -5pm (dealer day), March 9th and 10th - 9am - 6pm at the Sarasota Municipal Auditorium , 801 N. Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236. Contact: Kevin Wood at 941-993-3098 or visit Sarasotaguitarshow.com

Illinois Guitar & Gear Expo, Sunday March 10, 2024 at the Kankakee County Fairgrounds 213W 4000S Rd. Kankakee,IL 60901, 10am – 3pm For more info, visit: https://www.illinoisguitarexpo.com/

APRIL

The Greater Pittsburgh Guitar Show, Sunday, April 7, 2024. Printscape Arena, 114 Southpointe Blvd., Canonsburg, PA. Show hours 11-4. For more info contact Scott at (412) 716-8411, scotpro@comcast.net or visit www.guitarshowusa.com.

MAY

Dallas International Guitar Festival, May 5-7, 2023 at the Dallas Market Hall, 2200 N Stemmons Fwy, Dallas, TX, For more info visit www.guitarshow.com.

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, May 4-5, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

JUNE

Summer Ohio Guitar Show, Sunday, June 23, 2024 at the Makoy Center 5462 Center St, Hilliard, OH 43026 Show hours 11:30-5:00. For more info, contact Marc at (740) 797-3351.

guitardigest@frontier.com, www.ohioguitarshows.com.

SEPTEMBER

Jake's Guitar Show & Music Swap Meet, September 21-22, at the Indoor Treasure Barn, 1380 Rt 100, Barto, Pa. Hours 8-1. For more information contact Justin at (484)256-6515 or info@jakesfleamarket.com

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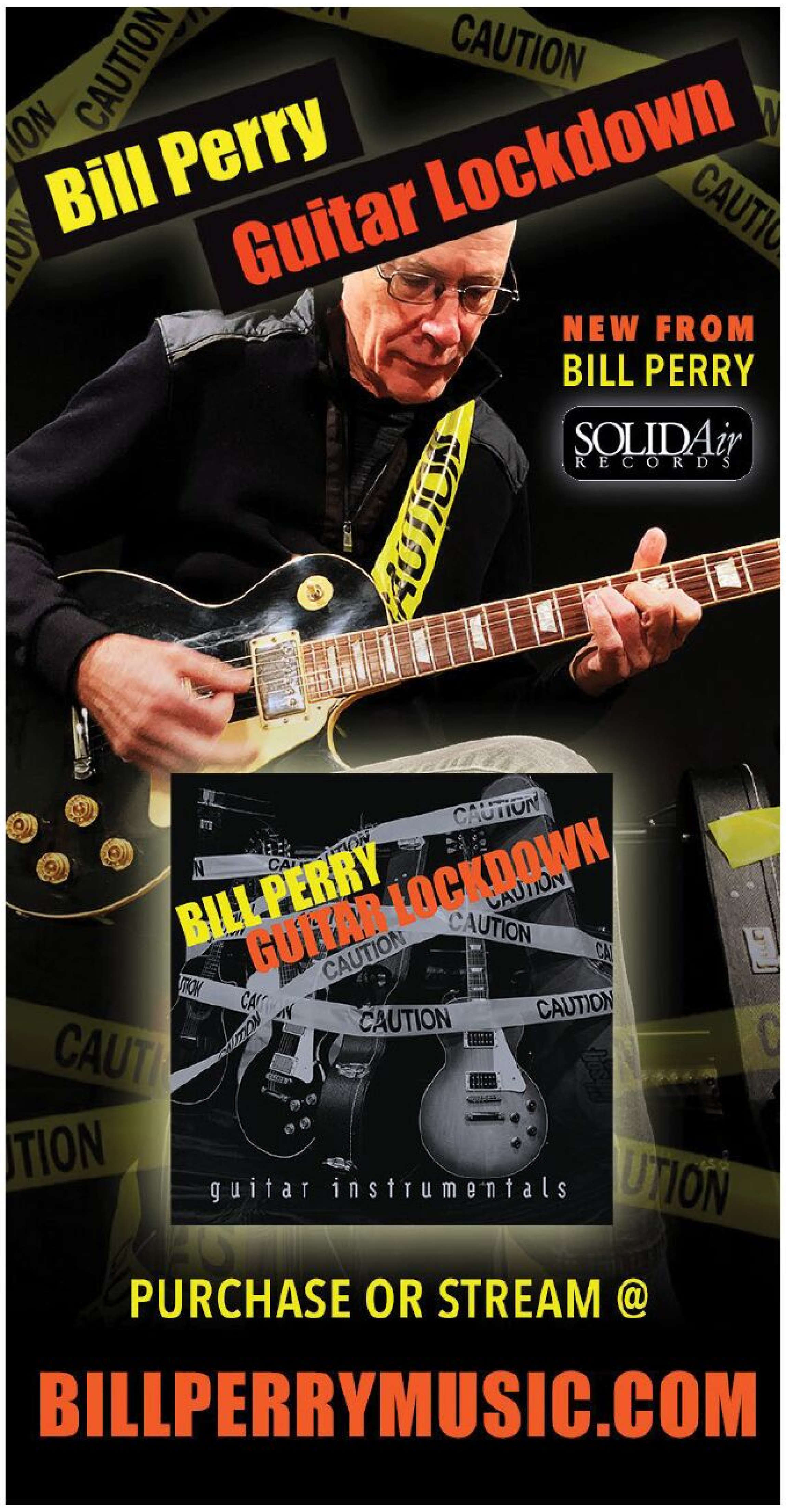
If you have information regarding upcoming guitar shows or events, visit http://www.vintageguitar.com/guitar-show-submission or e-mail james@vintageguitar.com. All submissions must be received by the 10th of each month, or they will appear in the next available issue. This listing is done as a service to our readers and we reserve final determination as to its contents.



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REVIEWS

PASSIONATE, FUNKY, AND SOULFUL

With a decades-long career and a boatload of albums to her credit, slide queen Joanna Connor is no stranger to blues, rock, pop, soul, and the acoustic-folk tradition.

On her new album, fans of extroverted slide guitar will dig hearing her tear it up on the funk-infused "Two of a Kind" and the severely rockin' "Mercury Blues." She absolutely sparkles on "Greatest of These," as her vocals seamlessly intertwine with lustrous bottleneck work.

Joe Bonamassa steps up to the plate for some uptempo major-pentatonic dueling on "Highway Child," while Josh Smith adds wicked lines to "Pain and Pleasure" and "House Rules." '90s shredder Gary Hoey makes an appearance adding guitar and background vocals on "Shine On," while Gulf Coast president Mike Zito picks up an axe for "Shadow Lover." "I Lost You" transcends blues, rock, and R&B – like if Laura Nyro could solo like Santana.

This is Connor's most-satisfying album to date, displaying her musical eclecticism in the best way – passionate, funky, and soulful. Dig it. **– *Oscar Jordan***

Joanna Connor
Best Of Me

Kentucky Colonels
1966

Clarence White is best known as the B-bendin' Telecaster pioneer with the Byrds – and his tragic 1973 death. But he's also admired for his groundbreaking flatpicking with the Kentucky Colonels. This set, now with bonus tracks, recalls a brief 1966-'67 reunion before Clarence joined the Byrds.

Despite the album's title, the studio tracks were actually recorded in early '67 and contain strong vocals along with nimble blasts of mandolin, banjo, guitar, fiddle, Dobro, and bass.

Skip ahead and cue up "Take Off Your Cheaters" to hear the Colonels just *burn* on their instruments, notably Roland White's hot mando and Bob Warford's banjo. The track is only 50 seconds long but almost steals the show. For flatpicking finesse, the two parts of "Soldier's Joy" are a romp with Clarence's sweet Martin flat-top out front. "Cotton Eyed Joe" is another 100-mph thriller, mixing vocal harmonies and blazing solos.

Known earlier as The Country Boys, the ensemble's bonus material comes from 1959-'61 radio broadcasts (hence, somewhat lower audio fidelity) with a teenaged Clarence White providing brief-but-muscular licks and backbone rhythm. You can grab this spirited bluegrass set on CD, digital, or good ol' vinyl. **– *Pete Prown***

Monster Mike Welch
Nothing But Time

George Harrison's "I Me Mine" in the middle of a blues album may seem left-field, but Mike Welch's tone-to-spare guitar and impassioned vocal make you wonder why nobody did it before. It sits alongside a version of Robert Johnson's "If I Had Possession Over Judgement Day" that compares favorably to Clapton's version. To say that Welch has range is an understatement.

He revisits Johnson on "Kind Hearted Woman Blues," done intimately with Welch on acoustic, while "Offswitch Blues" rocks an Elmore James groove and "Jump For Joy" puts the jump (and joy) in jump-blues. The instrumental "Afraid Of My Own Tears Parts 1 & 2" dips into '60s soul, with legendary Jerry Jemmott onboard as the perfect bassist.

As has come to be expected, Kid Andersen's production, engineering, and Greaseland Studios are first-rate. Welch penned 10 of the 14 songs, and though his picking may bring to mind greats from the Kings to Magic Sam and Peter Green, the distinctively wide vibrato and spontaneity are his stamps.

Joanna Connor: Maryam Wilcher.

The Chantays

"PIPELINE" AND BEYOND

By Dan Forte

When a friend introduced me to Bob Spickard and Brian Carman of the Chantays about 40 years ago, I immediately pumped them with questions: Who played lead and who played rhythm on their classic "Pipeline"? Which guitars did they record with? Was the song's quirky mix intentional?

Those two minutes amount to the greatest surf composition ever recorded. The pair wrote the masterpiece when they were 16 and, with Spickard playing the melody and Carman playing the iconic, tremolo-picked glissando, it reached #4 on the *Billboard* Hot 100 in 1963, as well as #11 on the R&B chart. I wasn't exaggerating when I told them, "You two combine to equal one of my biggest guitar influences."

"Pipeline" has been covered hundreds of times, from contemporary surf bands of the day like the Lively Ones and Challengers to guitar gods like Eric Johnson. It's also found its place in jazz (Pat Metheny, Bill Frisell), country (Junior Brown), easy listening (Lawrence Welk Orchestra), disco (Hot Butter), metal (Anthrax), and punk (Johnny Thunders). Jimmy Smith played it on the organ, Santo Farina interpreted it on steel guitar, and it was even a vehicle for trombonist Kai Winding. Stevie Ray Vaughan and Dick Dale tried their hand in *Back To The Beach*, and two pre-surf heroes, Duane Eddy and the Shadows' Hank Marvin, cut a version in '93.

So a Chantays album of previously unreleased material from the late '60s, *A Dawning Sun*, is welcome news indeed. The 10 cuts on the vinyl edition and three bonus tracks on CD reveal their classic sound intact while dabbling in pop and folk-rock. Spickard penned eight of the 10 tunes on the album proper, including three vocal numbers, rounded out by covers of the Belairs' "Mr. Moto" and "You've Got Your Troubles" via the Fortunes from England. The bonus cuts – "Riders In The Sky," the Astronauts' "Baja," and, of course, "Pipeline" – come from a stellar 1994 live album, *Next Set*.

"The Chantays was the first band Brian and I were in," Spickard revealed from his home in Huntington Beach, a.k.a. "Surf City." "We were all friends at Santa Ana High School, and we were influenced by a surf group called the Rhythm Rockers, with Brian's brother Steve on sax. I was very inspired by the Ventures, learning to play 'Perfidia' and 'Walk, Don't Run.' For my 15th birthday, I asked my dad if I could have an electric guitar. We went to Costa Mesa Music, and I got my Barth guitar with a Barth amplifier. I recorded 'Pipeline' on that, with Brian on his Montgomery Ward Airline. For our first dance, we rented the Tustin Youth Center for 25 bucks, and made about 50 bucks per man. We thought, 'This is pretty cool.' The next dance, we tripled that."

Richard Delvy was largely responsible for getting "Pipeline" regional airplay. The former Belairs and Challengers drummer was working for a record distributor and urged KAFY in Bakersfield to flip the 45 over from "Move It," which the label felt was the hit. The band's manager, Jack Sands, did the same at KFXM in San Bernardino, where he was a deejay. The result? "The phones started ringing immediately," according to Bob.

"After we got our first check, we got sunburst Stratocasters," Spickard recounts. "We special-ordered them with tortoiseshell pickguards. Then we had black outboard Reverb tanks and black 4x10 Fender Concert amps. Warren Waters played bass through a Dual Showman, with Rob Marshall on electric piano, and Bob Welch was the original drummer."

The drums were atypically low in the "Pipeline" mix ("It was planned that way," says Bob), and in fact stop cold for four bars in the middle.

The band played "Surfathon" at Hollywood's Pantages Theatre, and appeared on TV rock shows locally, such as Sam Riddle's "Ninth Street West," "The Lloyd Thaxton Show," and "Wink's Dance Party" with Wink Martindale. Nationally, they mimed to "Pipeline" on "The Lawrence Welk Show."

The band's follow-up single, "Beyond," was another worthy original, but by 1964, when the Beatles ushered in the British Invasion, it didn't chart. Likewise, changing tastes dictated *A Dawning Sun* being shelved. Marshall handled lead vocals on the album, with Spickard harmonizing on offerings reminiscent of the Association. The instrumental title cut owed more than a little to the Shadows' "Apache," and "Raylene" presented a beautiful, lush ballad.

Before passing away at age 70 in 2015, Carman was plant manager at Rickenbacker and later worked at Music Man while still providing that muted, reverbed rhythm in the group. Spickard, who still gigs occasionally, reflects back: "Fortunately for us, 'Pipeline' is considered a classic, especially of that era. Covers kind of kept us going all those years. It seemed like the Ventures used it on almost every album they released in Japan. We did three weeks there, from one end of the country to the other, including Budokan. We drew 20,000 people at one concert. They treated us like we were the Beatles."

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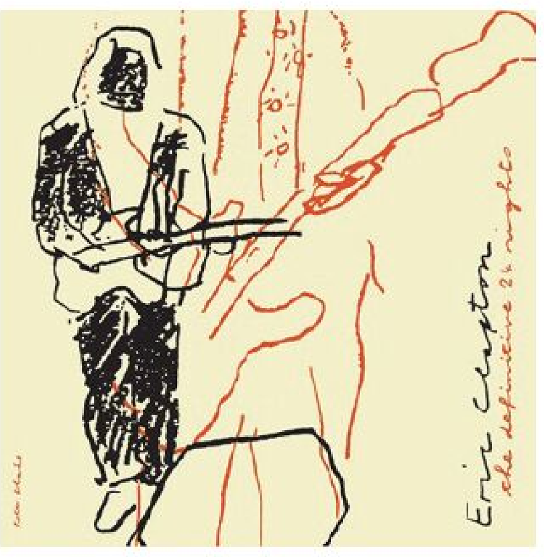
The Chantays photo courtesy of Sundazed Music.

When actor/blues aficionado Dan Aykroyd gave him the "Monster" tag 30 years ago, it was a gimmicky juxtaposition for a 13-year-old. Now, it's a fitting description of Welch's artistry. *– Dan Forte*



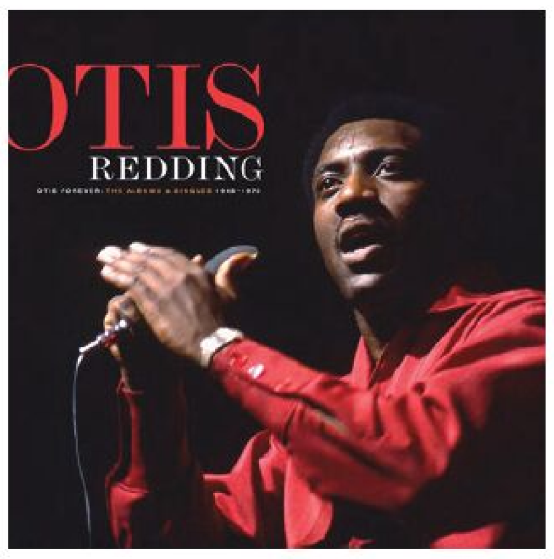
Eric Clapton
The Definitive 24 Nights

This box set heavily expands Slowhand's *24 Nights*, the live album and video of Eric Clapton's 1990-'91 residencies at London's Royal Albert Hall. It includes six hours of music, including 35 previously unreleased performances, while the rock, blues, and orchestral segments are also available separately.

Fortunately, Clapton wasn't in one of his nothing-left-to-prove phases, and is backed with top-flight musicians including Buddy Guy, Albert Collins, Robert Cray, and others. With their help, he's often pushed to exceptional Stratocaster highs.

The rock portion features an intense "I Shot the Sheriff," "Can't Find My Way Home," boisterous "Bad Love" (one of eight songs from 1989's slick *Journeyman*), and reggae-tinged "Knockin' on Heaven's Door." The Vegas-arrangement trappings of "Cocaine" detract from its raw power. The blues performances are more visceral; "Worried Life Blues" and "Reconsider Baby" stand out. Generally, the orchestra plays a supporting role; strings and brass enhance the core band, but not overpower it. "Edge of Darkness" is a brooding winner, while the zenith is the 29-minute "Concerto for Electric Guitar" with plenty of dynamic guitar excursions

Tons of live music – most of it not previously available – from one of our greatest living guitarists. What's not to love? *– Bret Adams*

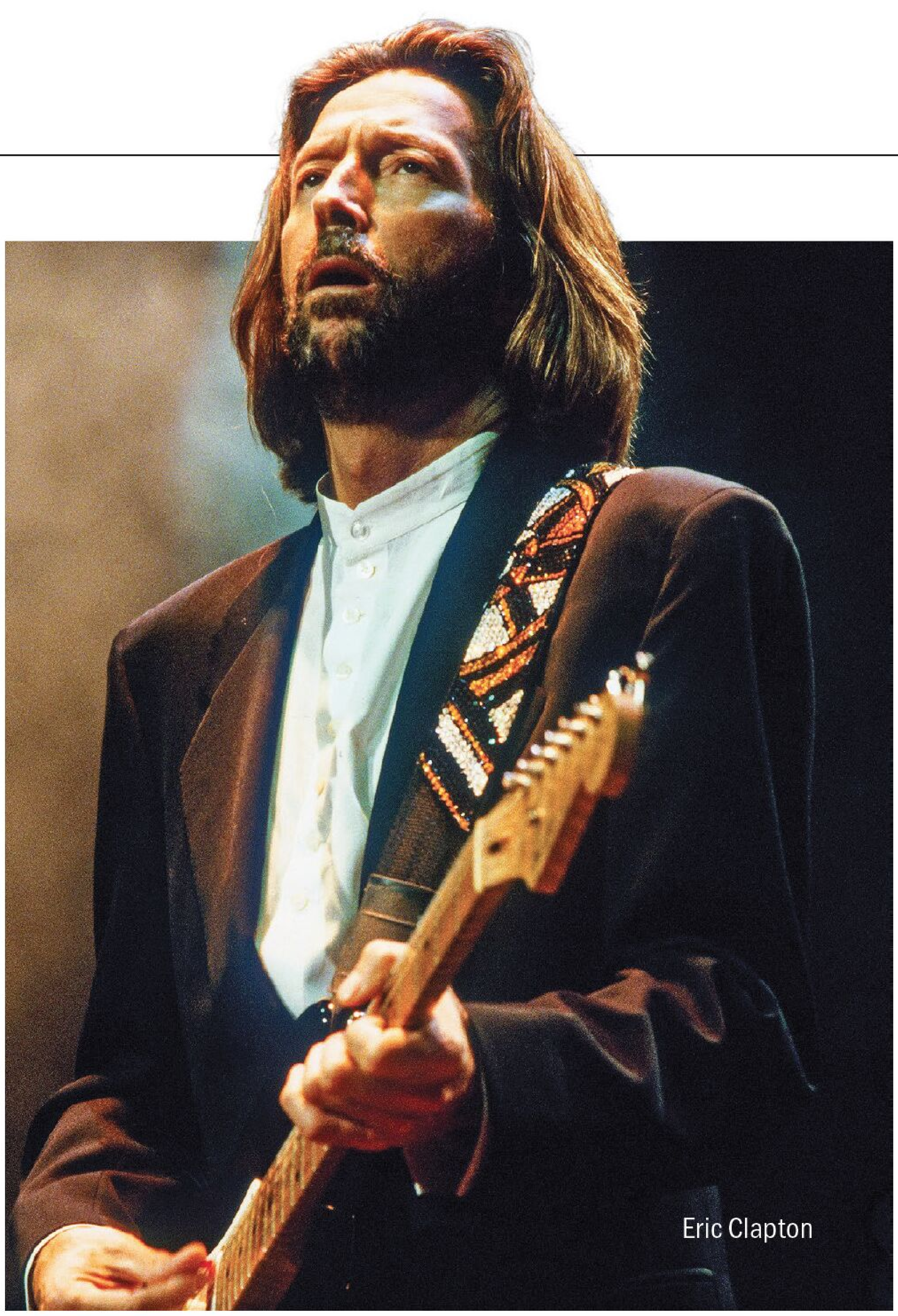


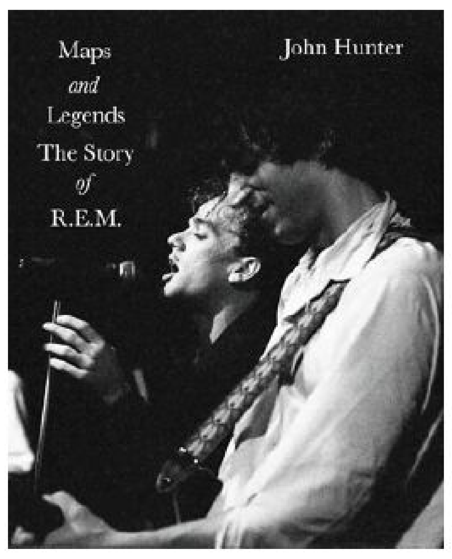
Otis Redding
Otis Forever: The Albums & Singles (1968-1970)

Otis Redding's death in a plane crash in late 1967 created a monumental task for producer and guitarist Steve Cropper – the posthumous presentation of Redding's unreleased work. Ultimately, four collections were released, including *The Dock of the Bay* (February '68); *The Immortal Otis Redding* (June '68); *Love Man* (June '69); and *Tell the Truth* (July '70). They're all reissued in this new vinyl box, along with two other LPs that collect mono versions of Redding's singles issued from '68 to '70.

While Redding's voice will always be the star of the show, this set is also a deep dive into soul guitar, courtesy of the genre's primary architect. Cropper's thoughtful restraint is evident on achingly beautiful ballads like "I Love You More Than Words Can Say," "I've Got Dreams to Remember" and "A Waste of Time." But he's in his element on uptempo numbers like "Nobody's Fault But Mine" and the driving "Hard to Handle," where Cropper, never one to compete with the horns, stays close to the chords and simply locks in a wide groove.

A master class in unflashy guitar – and a document of one of the most-consequential musical partnerships ever forged between a singer and a guitarist. *– Sean McDevitt*


Eric Clapton



John Hunter
Maps and Legends: The Story of R.E.M.

Any balanced rock-and-roll bio scrutinizes a band's more-unsavory side. And scrutinize is exactly what John Hunter does in this unauthorized bio of '80s indie darlings turned '90s megastars R.E.M.

The band's more-egregious tendencies deserve the stink eye – like guitarist Peter Buck's infamous reputation as an unreliable source and the band's proclivity to privately contradict its preachy public politics. Unfortunately, the author too often veers into territory that's rock crit at best, an airing of grievances at worst. Devoting 30 pages to why *Monster* is a bad album, for example, is a slog. Elsewhere, he harps on Buck's lack of musical chops on early records and performances. One gasping passage even implies that the guitarist's dislike of '80s synth-pop is a "hair's breadth away from homophobia."

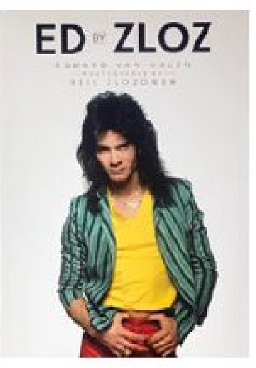
A musician himself, Hunter does take care to provide decent coverage of the band's evolving studio methods, Buck's gear and his arpeggiated style, throwing in details like his iconic, drone-string tuning. Not to say R.E.M. warrants a shiny happy hagiography, but at 704 pages and with *no* new band interviews to lean on, the author's critical voice ultimately stifles any sense of balance – or revelation. *– Dennis Pernu*

Hot Tuna
Live at Sweetwater / Live in Japan

Jorma Kaukonen, who started as an acoustic folk-blues guitarist, returned to that style in 1969 when he and bassist

Eric Clapton: Carl Studna.

extra EXTRA



NEIL ZLOZOWER
Ed by Zloz

Van Halen's official photographer in its DLR heyday, "Zloz" had a helluva ride. Mixing hundreds of rarely or never-seen images with EVH playing his iconic Frankenstrats, Les Pauls, and acoustic, some shots here are contact-sheet spares. Still, devotees of VH (and rock photography) will eat up all 384 pages. Zlozower's text is sparse, but conveys his affection, rock attitude, and bluster. *– Ward Meeker*

GAMMA
What's Gone is Gone: Complete Elektra Recordings 1979-1982

Two years after Montrose broke up, Gamma delivered FM hard rock with guitar hero Ronnie Montrose, vocalist Davey Pattison, and heavy synthesizers. Bundling three albums here, "Thunder and Lightning" rocks with hot riffing, while "Voyager" and "Mobile Devotion" are boundary-stretching sonic adventures. The Hollies cover "I'm Alive" and "Right the First Time" were modest hits. Under-promoted then, Gamma deserves attention now. *– BA*

VANDENBERG
Sin

Former Yngwie vocalist Mats Levén joins guitarist Adrian Vandenberg for a heaping helping of bodacious riffage, escapist heaviosity, Zeppelin breakdowns, and Euro-Metal badassery. Adrian wails over gothic riffs using epic themes reminiscent of the Flying Dutchman's pre-Whitesnake days. The title track displays Vandenberg's penchant for neo-classical virtuosity and a vibrato that still slays. *– OJ*

THE VENTURES
New Space

Skip the corny opener ("Fly Me to the Moon"), and go straight to "Moon Base Drive," a rocker with rich, vintage sonics. Featuring father/son guitarists Bob and Ian Spalding, this concept album blasts into orbit with "The Alien," sporting cool vibrato and wah effects. "Space Suit" mines '60s country pastiches, while "The Mercury Run" has that timeless Ventures twang. *– PP*

ANNIE BARTHOLOMEW
Sisters of White Chapel

This Alaskan singer/songwriter/banjoist tells compelling stories of sex workers during the 19th-century gold rush in Alaska and the Yukon. The tasteful acoustic accompaniment features Andrew and Erin Heist on fiddle and guitar, respectively, and guitarist/producer Justin Smith. Instruments include a '30s Kalamazoo and a custom acoustic that luthier Devon Champlain built from an oak dresser. A formidable debut. *– DF*

NICK SHILTON, EDITOR
John Wetton An Extraordinary Life

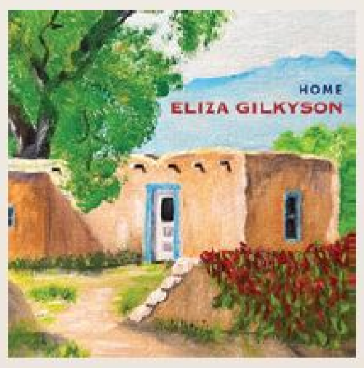
Wetton – the beloved vocalist/bassist of Asia, King Crimson, Uriah Heep, Roxy Music, and U.K. – died in 2017, and this book includes first-person remembrances including bandmates Steve Howe and Robert Fripp. Hailed for his radio-ready voice and underrated bass chops, as well as backstage triumph over alcoholism, Survivor's Jim Peterik recalls, "John's legacy includes commercializing great musicianship." *– BA*

JONAH TOLCHIN
Dockside

Taste and economy comprise the nucleus of Jonah Tolchin's lead-guitar work, which on his latest album ranges from brooding, yearning, Delta-inspired blues like "Nothing's Gonna Take My Blues Away" and "Endless Highway" to more-compact melodic fare like the R&B-infused "Searching for My Soul." A versatile platter of American roots music with thoughtful blues-guitar statements – and without the extra notes. *– SM*

ARIELLE
'73

Arielle weaves succulent guitar parts within a pastiche of '60s pop, classic rock, and a ditty about her prized '73 VW "bay window" bus. Adept at single-note soloing, slide, and boom-chicka-boom rhythm, Arielle is a catchy tunesmith with beautiful melodies in her heart. Her imagination soars betwixt the dirty guitars of "Kalypso" and buoyant vocal lines on "Weakness For You." *– OJ*

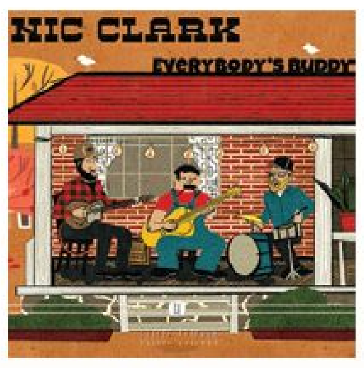


ELIZA GILKYSON
Home

This follow-up to the contemporary folkie's 2022 *Songs from the River Wind* features more of Gilkyson's earnest originals, enhanced by multi-instrumentalist Don Richmond's tasteful electric and acoustic guitars. His understated slide playing adds depth to the bluesy "Safety Zone." "Man in the Bottle" benefits from Don's deftly-added amplified textures, while "Here Comes the Night" rocks even harder thanks to snarling guitar and intense mandolin. *– RK*

GREG DIAMOND
Beata

Guitarist Greg Diamond's latest explores the relationship between modern jazz and Latin music. With empathic ensemble work from bassist Edward Pérez and Ludwig Afonso on drums, *Beata* is a launchpad for moody self-expression; originals and covers like "Salas" and "El Condor Pasa" will mesmerize. Diamond improvises with rare sensitivity – check out his complex, percussive attack on the title track. *– OJ*



NIC CLARK
Everybody's Buddy

While Clark's back story – an eating disorder, middle-school bullying – isn't exactly working as a sharecropper, angst is angst, and music was his balm, specifically the blues. The harpist/guitarist's sophomore outing has a sincere feel, with originals like "Laughing At The Rain," in a relaxed Jimmy Reed vein. "It'll Be Alright" and "She's A Fighter" recall Curtis Mayfield and Keb' Mo', respectively. *– DF*

JEFF BECK
Tribute

This three-song EP is something of a sonic eulogy, as two cuts are from the icon's memorial service in February. "Midnight Walker Lament" combines Jeff's soloing and Imelda May's spoken-word poetry, while "Elegy for Dunkirk" has a heart-ripping solo. Helping us with our grief, the closer is a joyous "Goin' Down" – heavy with harmonica and Beck's life-affirming Strat. *– PP*

Jack Casady formed Hot Tuna. Recordings from their early gigs at Bay Area clubs made up their 1970 debut LP. While the lineup has varied over the past half-century, the duo's roots focus remains a constant.

This three-disc, 47-track collection reissues three '90s albums – two live sets from Sweetwater Music Hall in Mill Valley, California, and another from Japan. Other musicians joined Kaukonen, Casady, and longtime second guitarist Michael Falzarano as they delved into their characteristically rich blend of blues, gospel, jazz folk, country and rockabilly. Bob Weir sat in on the first Sweetwater performance, Happy Traum the second.

Kaukonen's easy-going vocals and solid fingerpicking remain the focus, as he delivers the longtime Tuna favorite "Hesitation Blues," two rousing versions of "San Francisco Bay Blues" and the ancient black folk tune, "Follow the Drinking Gourd." He even steps back to the Airplane era to reprise his original instrumental "Embryonic Journey." Kaukonen's acoustic skills and Casady's solid bass reflect well on a band that's endured decades longer than the Airplane. ***– Rich Kienzle***

2Frontiers' Gregory Mulkern

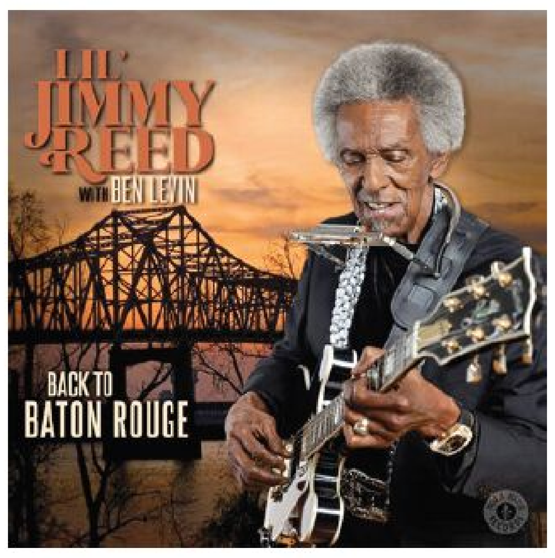
2Frontiers

New Old West

Categories can be bandied about – catchalls like Americana or *alt* this or that – but this is basically old-timey Appalachian music, and done very well. The set of originals features Gregory Mulkern, a.k.a Banjoelectric (where he employs loops and effects), and Sjoerd Van Ravenzwaaij (a member of the rocked-out traditional Irish group Harmony Glen) trading vocals and supplying guitar, mandolin, banjo, and percussion. A nice rendition of the well-worn "The Cuckoo," the only cover, starts as an instrumental duet of five-string and tenor banjos titled "Circle Woods."

Descriptions such as "Nick Cage meets Bauhaus, a Southern Gothic song with drive" for the droning "Darkness," or "a wide-open love song to the Wild West" for "The Land Where Casey Jones Is Gone" may be apt, but they deprive listeners from conjuring their own images. The latter calls to mind the soundtrack Ry Cooder and David Lindley contributed to the Jesse James film *The Long Riders*, while "Long Dead Man" hearkens to a field-worker song or chain gang.

Straddling authentic and fresh sounds is no mean feat, but Van Ravenzwaaij and Mulkern pull it off. ***– DF***



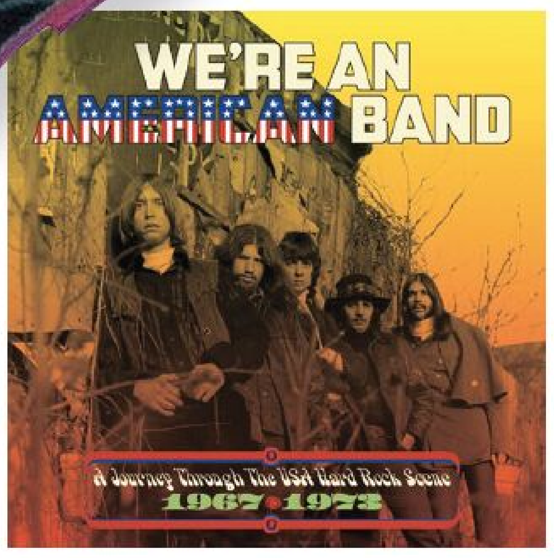
Lil' Jimmy Reed with Ben Levin

Back To Baton Rouge

Leon Atkins got a cigar box guitar at six, after already playing harmonica. After subbing when blues legend Jimmy Reed was too inebriated to play a Louisiana juke joint in the '50s, the Louisiana-born Atkins earned the nickname Lil' Jimmy Reed. Lil' Jimmy gigged locally, but didn't record until he was 58. The intervening years were spent running his own barber shop and serving in the military for 20 years.

For his fourth album, the 85-year-old is accompanied by producer Ben Levin on piano, with Lil' Jimmy playing harmonica on a rack and expertly supplying guitar fills and rhythm, a la his idol. On three Reed covers, he does his hero justice, more homage than impersonation, and Slim Harpo and Joe Liggins are also represented. Also shining are the original slow blues "They Call Me Lil' Jimmy" and talking blues "Engine Light," with Jimmy's guitar imitating a car's temperamental starter. The loping, spare title cut carries an effective string-snapping solo.

Levin, who is 60 years Reed's junior, does a fine job, but it'd be nice to also see a project featuring veteran blues and boogie pianist Bob Hall and bassist Hilary Blythe, who constitute Atkins' overseas touring band. ***– DF***



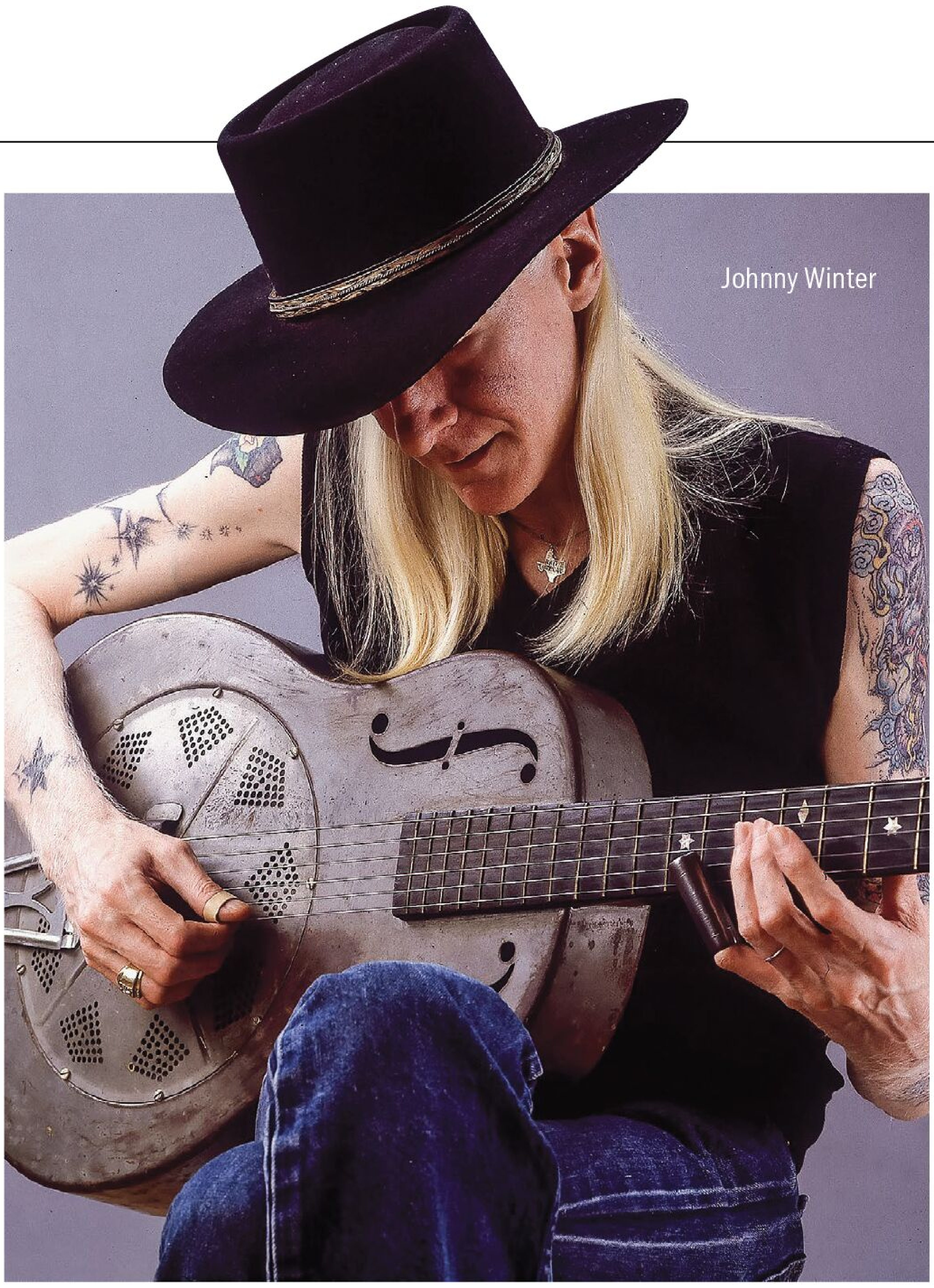
Various artists

We're an American Band: A Journey Through The USA Hard Rock Scene, 1967-1973

Early hard-rock bands were often British (Led Zep, Sabbath, Purple), but this box set looks at the American acts morphing from psychedelia into something crunchier. The wildly influential Vanilla Fudge delivers "Ticket to Ride," with Tim Bogert's thundering bass, and Iron Butterfly's "Theme" is acid-rock incarnate using an eerie, chromatic riff. Blue Cheer's diabolical cover of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues" was a revolutionary roar; Leigh Stephens' cranked-up tones weren't metal, but still damn hairy for 1968.

In contrast to bigger bands, minor acts are included, like the Blues Magoos, whose "Chicken Wire Lady" defies categorization. It's not hard rock yet, nor is the Human Beinz's "April 15th" with its fuzz riff and Pete Townshend-style power chords.

Gregory Mulkern: Victoria De Armond.


Johnny Winter

Justin Cody Fox

Alice Cooper dropped its 1969 anthem "Fields of Regret" via dirt-spewing axe men Buxton and Bruce, while Frijid Pink ignites a square-wave blast of "House of the Rising Sun."

By disc three, we're well into '70s thump with ZZ Top (the fierce "Neighbor Neighbor"), Cactus ("Evil"), Blue Öyster Cult ("Transmaniacon"), Todd Rundgren ("Is It My Name"), and Grand Funk, whose 1973 cowbell classic gave this box its title. Even 50 years later, Mark Farner's solo is still a thing of molten, phase-shifter beauty. **– PP**

Justin Cody Fox
New Southern

North Carolina singer/songwriter Justin Cody Fox's latest involves a '61 Gibson SG and former Black Crowes guitarist Audley Freed. With Fox and Freed on guitars and sharing production duties with Tommy Brothers, *New Southern* mines the roots-adjacent worlds of country, southern rock, and Americana. Robust acoustic guitars, twangy pedal steel, and gritty electrics make an appearance on an album that covers lots of territory. From the AC/DC-inspired "Show Me Your Light" to the old-school pop country of "Dying Breed," *New Southern* is a feast.

Fred Eltringham on drums, David Morse and Robert Kearns on bass, and Jen Gunderman and Rhett Huffman on keys provide solid backing. The album's strength lies in its stylistic diversity and crafty guitar arrangements. "Living Ghosts," "Walking These Blues," and "Wheels" offset bleeding heart blues and country ballads with edgy guitars and regional authenticity. Dig the outro guitar solo on "Have You Seen An Angel." Mercy!

Clear production uplifts clever tunes with flawless arrangements. Fox is a full-blown crooner with the vocal chops to pull off the most hackneyed ballad without an ounce of self-awareness. With Fox on guitar and vocals, and Freed on stunt guitar, this disc is a winner. **– OJ**

Johnny Winter
Guitar Slinger

Texas-born guitarist/vocalist Johnny Winter, who died at 70 in 2014, was steeped in the blues, but many of his big FM hits were rock-oriented. He ultimately boomeranged back to straight blues, and one highlight from this return to that comfort zone was 1984's *Guitar Slinger*. The Grammy-nominated album was his first of three releases on Alligator Records, and has now been reissued on 140-gram vinyl, making it available for the first time in 30 years.

Guitar Slinger doesn't include any Winter originals, but he sounds fully engaged and energized on his interpretations. Johnny's singing is forceful and guitar work is more scalding than boiling water. The wicked slide playing on "It's My Life, Baby" is otherworldly. The joint slide solo with Billy Branch's harmonica solo crush Muddy Waters' "Iodine in My Coffee." Winter's notes on "Boot Hill" fly like popcorn in a popper. "Lights Out" is an exciting '50s-style kicker with tenor sax and Winter's buzzing solo.

It's important to note that this reissue replaces "Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye" with the previously unreleased Lightnin' Slim cover "Nothin' But the Devil" featuring harmonica legend James Cotton. For Winter fans and vinyl purists, this batch o' blues is a no-brainer. **– BA** **VG**

Johnny Winter: Paul Natkin. Justin Cody Fox: Lauren Fox.

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INSTRUMENTS FOR SALE

2005 Fender Reverse Proto Stratocaster - Dennis Galuszka Masterbuilt #025. Mint, Collector-grade. No lacquer checking. Original purchaser. 100% as received. Reverse headstock with all the '69 rock-guitar vibe. $7,900.00 plus shipping. Email for pics/details whatsupjp@gmail.com

1989 Fender Eric Clapton Strat (Blackie), all original with tweed case, exc. cond. Best offer over $1,400 + shpg. 1992 Les Paul bass (LPB-1), all original with soft case, exc. cond. Best offer. Dave dloughery@verizon.net

Fender Player Duo-Sonic, 2021 model, excellent condition; one small ding on a back edge. Desert Sand body, maple neck, gold aluminum pickguard. Tuners replaced with Kluson Revolution 19:1 units. Comes w/ tired but serviceable gig bag. $575 OBO. info & pics: machambers@charter.net

1966 Gibson EB-2C bass.Semihollow with Gibson EB pickup. Appears completely original. Electronics function no scratchiness. Case original factory good functioning condition wear to exterior. Finish very good condition small nicks & bumps.Headstock has pro repair. Break shown in pictures. Repair solid. Priced $4000 & $150 to ship any location lower CONS Payment Zelle or USPS money order only. doctormrd@gmail.com

1927 Martin O-18?. Willie Nelson look a like, one of a kind! Restored by luthier James Hood (San Diego, 2012). Plays/sounds great. Appraised by Gruhn in 2000. Email to discuss details. esbalian@gmail.com $3,500/offers.

2013 Gibson Custom Shop 1957 Gold Top reissue R7 with Dark Back. Comes with original brown case and all case candy. Excellent condition. $3600.00 plus shipping. Email for pictures and more info. acarilloguitar@gmail.com

2011 Fender AVRI 62, Jazzmaster $2,300, 1952/59 Les Paul Conversion-CALL, 1988 Rick Roger McGuinn COA and case candy 6.5k Ex+++, 1954 J45 $6.5k, 2002 R8 w/COA $3,900, 2006 Gibson CS LP Stars & Stripes $5k. rich@thefishingline.com

Gibson ES-335; 2022 cherry gloss, mint condition with all factory paperwork and case candy, OHSC. Only $3250. esbalian@gmail.com

1955 Martin O-18. Professionally refinished/repaired Professionally installed LR Baggs dual source pickup. Guitar is in good playable condition looks good, sounds great. Newer Martin molded hardshell case, original chipboard case is available. Appraised by Gruhn Guitars at $2000 (will provide copy to serious buyer). $1800 + shipping (US only). Email for pics or more info: ambrose3702@gmail.com

INSTRUMENTS WANTED

Vox V246 phantom stereo 12 string guitar in any condition. 1-206-913-2837 or b.brinkley@comcast.net

Steve Vai and Joe Satriani guitars. Collector buying multicolor Jems, Universe models and JS guitars with graphics. Also buying vintage USA B.C. Rich, Jackson, Charvel, and Performance guitars. Quick, easy deals. brett8388@gmail.com

AMPS FOR SALE

1958 Original Fender Champ. Respectively serviced and ready to use. $2,999 Other Fender tweed in the collection. Contact ampman57@aol.com

1965 Vox AC 15T in great shape, serial # 01366. Works great, sounds great. Comes with nice Vox cover. Also have some vintage foot pedals, 1960s Vox Tone Bender serial# 1564915 and two Gibson Maestro FZ-1A Fuzz Tone one with input cord and one without. All items work well. Please e-mail me at michaelbkennedy@live.com and we can discuss pricing and I can send you pictures. Serious Inquiries only.

'62 Tweed Champ in Tinted Repro. Fender Cab. Nos Tubes, Mod 8" speaker, Weber Cp & Resistor Kit. Orig.Cab & Reconed Alnico included. Sounds like a Baby Bassman! $3625 or BO. Neil Fretague ,pics sent on request 862-314-3137

1975 Original Fender Princeton Reverb Amp. Clean, great bell-like tones and overdriven sounds. Serviced years ago and not played much since. Great reverb and Trem. $2150. SF Bay Area. rmhirsch@gmail.com

MISC FOR SALE

Ivory Guitar Picks - Handmade Alaskan fossilized walrus ivory & mastodon ivory, great tone, beautiful, cool, lasts forever, $25. You won't play w/ plastic again. Guaranteed. Send check to: Mark Kostreba, 7661 Delridge, Anchorage, AK 99507-3015. mark-kostreba@gci.net (AK)

Tycobrahe Pedal Flanger from the late 1970s. All original, still works. Automatic variable speed and manual operation get's a thousand sounds from liquid lush to space alien. No rust, Blue, and in very good condition. Can provide unique very deep intensity for sounds like no other flanger I've heard. Includes crate box top but is missing original rubber feet. $499. 678-392-7068

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Longtime pedal collector has some for sale. Contact waltdsmelt@gmail.com

Guitar display cases for wall mounting. Three cases available. Contact Derek at 815-529-1907 or email restof88@outlook.com.

MISC WANTED

Fender Blackface Dual Showman Cab - 36W x 24W x 11D in excellent condition. I am in Texas. randy.bacus@gmail.com

1960 Fender Jazzmaster neck. Prefer unmodified but normal playing wear ok. marcusvichert@gmail.com

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Red House Amplifiers! Specializing in vintage Fender amplifiers. Service and repair for all vintage tube amplifiers. Located in the crossroads of America. Indianapolis, IN. Call or text 317-504-7474. Contact us for detailed instructions on removing your chassis and proper packing to ship your amp in for service safely. Check our Google reviews from many extremely satisfied clients!

How does your tube guitar amp sound? Has the tone got up and gone? How does it make you feel? Parts wear out and fall out of tolerances, tubes wear out, etc. I can make your tube amp sound better than it did the day it left the store. I have been doing this for decades. Only the finest parts. Quick turnaround! Call Bryan 770-329-1380 tomatone763@gmail.com

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STOLEN INSTRUMENTS

Fender Jazz bass L90890 when last seen was hot pink and wired in stereo. Fender bass, Olympic white when last seen, P bass body with Jazz bass neck L21023 was in blonde Fender case. Serial numbers are correct or close as I can remember them now. Don Mossman 419-668-1010 donmos@roadrunner.com

My wife's mint 1972 Fender Strat serial # 656011. Natural finish, ash body, maple fretboard. EMG pickups, black guard. Stolen from our home along with other items in Nov. 1995, Louisville, KY. Would love to find this. Contact me at (502) 544-9067, or giordanotp@twc.com

ULTIMATE HOD ROD

Charvel's Pro-Mod So-Cal Style 1 FR E HSS

Designed more than 30 years ago, the latest incarnation of Charvel's Pro-Mod So-Cal keeps the "super" in superstrat.

An eye-catching, ergonomic guitar with alder body bolted to a U-shaped, oiled-maple neck with 12" to 16" radius, 25.5" scale, compound-radius fretboard, and 22 jumbo frets, it also has an ebony fretboard with dot inlays, and other touches include die-cast tuning machines, single Volume and Tone controls, and a Floyd Rose 1000 Series vibrato.

The Style 1 FR E HSS uses Seymour Duncan Custom Flat Strat single-coil pickups at the neck and middle positions, and a Duncan Distortion TB-6 humbucker in the bridge. The neck pickup is overwound, middle is pristine (reverse wind/reverse polarity for hum canceling), and the humbucker roars. A five-position selector yields humbucker sounds in Position 1, bridge inner single-coil and middle pickup in 2, outer bridge single-coil and neck in 3, middle and neck pickup in 4, and full neck pickup in 5. Any and all sounds can be combined (the single-coils emit moderate 60-cycle hum).

Price: $1,099
www.charvel.com

Plugged into a Marshall combo or Deluxe Reverb, the Style 1 FR E HSS proved comfortable, with even weight distribution and offering more girth than typical shred-style guitars. The Floyd Rose endured sadistic abuse and – impressively – held tune.

The single-coils yielded rugged sparkle and a glossy Alnico V chime, while the Distortion humbucker offered more range than its name suggests – tight bass, soft mids, and clear highs made it quite versatile. This axe can shred alongside '80s-era George Lynch, bop with Mike Stern, or funk along with Nile Rodgers. It shines through a clean amp for funky chord work, works well for gut-wrenching blues solos, and roars when high-gain mayhem is required.

Overall, the Style 1 FR E HSS delivers a variety of vibrant Strat sounds, hot-rod muscle, and effortless playability. ***– Oscar Jordan***

START ME UP

The Dr. Z 35th Anniversary Carmen Ghia 1x10

At the forefront of high-end boutique design, the Carmen Ghia was Dr. Z's first commercially available amplifier when launched in 1988, and has never been absent from the company's lineup. So it's fitting that the good Dr. (a.k.a. Mike Zaite) is celebrating it with a 35th Anniversary version.

A hand-wired, single-channel 1x10 combo with a pair of NOS military-spec 6N14N (EL84 variant) power tubes, two 12AX7s in the preamp, and a 5Y3 rectifier, the 35th Ann CG makes an immediate impression with its size (small), weight (30 pounds), and bare-bones control panel with Volume, Tone and Master knobs. The aesthetic may be "too" simple for some, but make no mistake – everything about this amp is serious.

Price: $2,099
www.drzamps.com

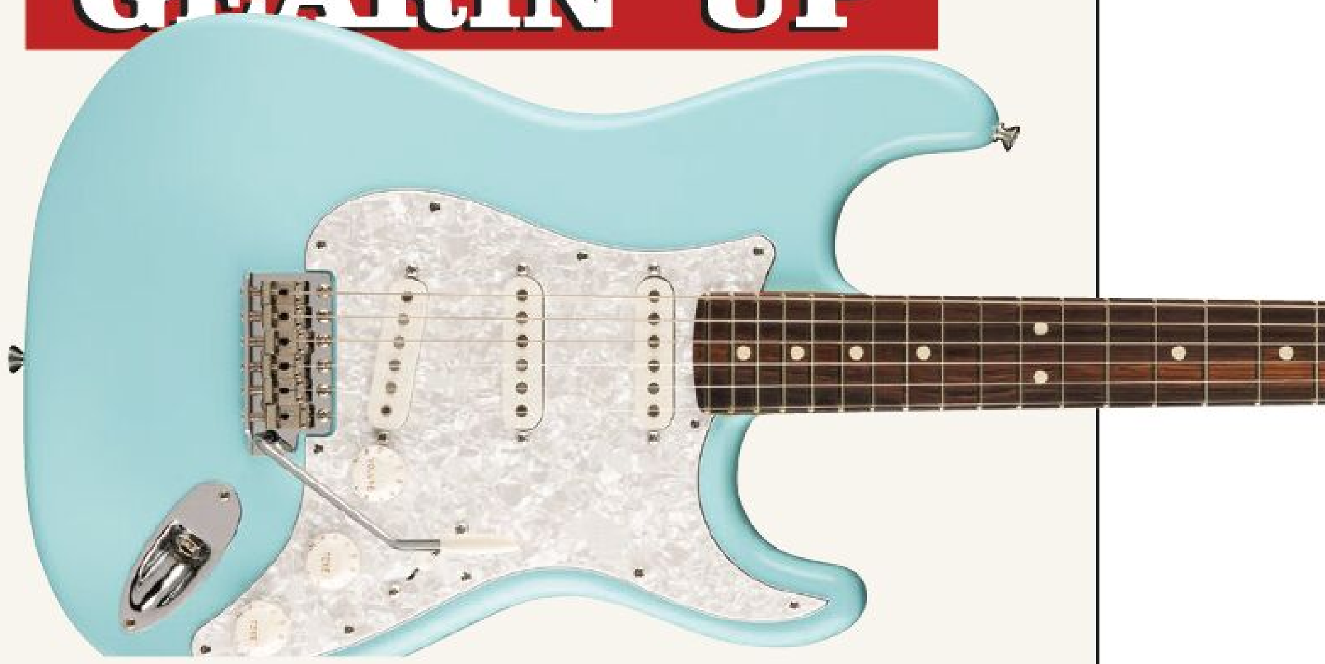
With a Telecaster plugged in and all controls set at 12 noon, our tester generated pure Tele tone with amazing clarity and authenticity. Same with a Les Paul, Strat, and Les Paul Junior; the Carmen Ghia has an amazing ability to capture the character of whatever is plugged in while responding to nuances of one's play. Exceedingly articulate, with great top-end chime, presence, and just enough compression to feel really good under the fingers, you may hear your guitars in an all-new way. Low-end stays tight and punchy with a percussive feel.

The Volume and Master (placed in the circuit after the phase inverter) work well together and create a variety of sounds from clean to crunch at virtually any volume. For bedroom-level grit, inch the Volume up (with Master down), or go Volume down with Master up for chimey cleans. Crank both for in-your-face crunch and sustain while using the guitar's Volume knob to shave a bit of hair. Tapping the ultra-responsive Tone control helps reveal a surprising pallet of color at your fingertips.

Doing its part is a lightweight, resonant poplar plywood cab with a 10" WGS Veteran 30 speaker that renders a *big*, musical sound that's louder than you'd expect.

The Carmen Ghia is a versatile, compact tone beast that whoops the pants off many amps twice its size. Its harmonically rich, almost 3D tone must be experienced to be believed – and it easily fits in the back seat.
– Charlie Wilkins

GEARIN' UP

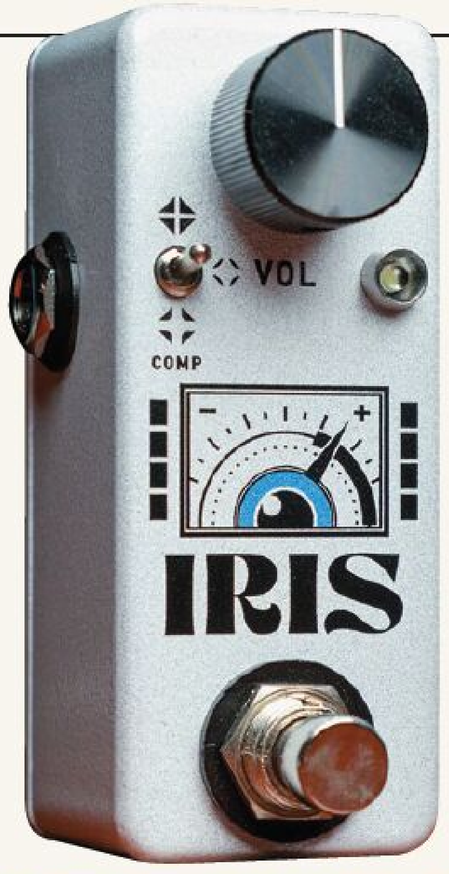


FENDER CORY WONG STRATOCASTER

Fender's Cory Wong Stratocaster has a scaled-down alder body, maple neck with Ultra Modern D shape, rosewood fretboard with rolled edges, Duncan Cory Wong Clean Machine pickups, a push pot on Tone 2 that bypasses the five-way and defaults to P4, vintage-style synchronized vibrato, Deluxe locking tuners, custom neck plate, and a hair tie for muting the vibrato springs.

ELECTRO-HARMONIX WALKING ON THE MOON

The EHX Andy Summers Walking on the Moon flanger/filter pedal has controls for Rate, Range, and Color. Its Filter Matrix disengages the LFO from the flanger, for a fixed-filter effect that adds chime or metallic overtones. Its Dry out splits dry from effected signal.



COPPERSOUND IRIS

CopperSound Pedals' Iris compressor uses an original optical circuit and has a toggle to select three levels that work with its Volume knob to smooth dynamics and thicken signal. Its mechanical stomp switch is true-bypass.

VG APPROVED GEAR

SEMI-HOLLOW MAGIC

The Ibanez Artcore Expressionist AM93QM

There comes a time in a guitarist's life when one becomes hollowbody curious, and semi-hollow guitars are often the gateway – and they ain't cheap.

Ibanez offers a solution with its Artcore Expressionist series of semi- and full-hollowbody guitars with excellent construction.

The Expressionist AM93QM Semi-Hollow allows the curious to experience the iconic overtones of Cream-era Clapton, the sinewy sophistication of *Royal Scam*-era Larry Carlton, and the mellifluous machinations of Grant Green, even when they're on a budget.

The AM93QM has quilted-maple top, back, and sides, a 12" radius, three-piece nyatoh/maple set neck, and a bound ebony fretboard with block inlays and 22 medium frets. Other details include Quik Change III tailpiece, Gibraltar Performer Bridge, and two Super 58 pickups.

Plugged into a well-stocked pedalboard and going through a blackface Fender and Marshall combo, the guitar emitted semi-hollow warmth, light midrange, and woody resonance with all the comfort of an ergonomic solidbody; if this guitar were a movie, it'd be titled *The Smooth, The Warm, & The Punchy*, due in part to the legendary vintage-style Super 58s, which work exceptionally well independently or in unison, providing a transparent edginess that allows the amp's character and effects to take center stage.

Price: $699.99
www.ibanez.com

The body's center block pushes sustain to near-solidbody status while staying lightweight. With no fear of feedback, our AM93QM sculpted gain from a variety of dirt boxes, adding splashes of wooliness and jangle. Ambient and live-sounding, its tone translates powerfully when plugged in – screaming, barking, and soothing. More importantly, it nails Leo Nocentelli's Meters-style funk tone from the middle pickup.

Played straight into a jazz rig and with a bit of manipulation of its Tone knob, the AM93QM does well playing bop.

While Ibanez has fleets of higher-end semi-hollow models like the John Scofield and George Benson signature guitars, getting to know the AM93QM is fun while exploring shades of blues, jazz, rock, and fusion *without* being hauled off to the poorhouse. – ***Oscar Jordan***

Price: $199
www.interstellaraudiomachines.com

NEXT-LEVEL DRIVE

Interstellar Audio Machines' Octonaut Hyperdrive

Interstellar Audio Machines advertised its original Octonaut Hyperdrive as, "The only overdrive you'll ever need." Well...

The new version offers boost based on the Klon Centaur; its secret sauce is Germanium diodes that blend dry signal with drive. With knobs for Volume, Drive, Ton (treble/tone), and an internal switch that alternates between true-bypass and buffered, the Octonaut is easy-peasy. In a small housing, it's also perfect for placement alongside other pedals.

Designed to add low to medium overdrive (*not* high gain), the pedal adds muscle to blues solos, heats up a clean amp for heavy rock, or pushes a high-gain rig to glory. Armed with a superstrat and a crusty Marshall combo pushed to a dirty sweet spot, the Octonaut delivered a narrow (but useful) range of gainy analog flavors nestled between ZZ Top and early Van Halen, while adding poppin' fresh harmonics with cozy midrange. This pedal is *perfect* for aggressive blues-rock with a bigger, more-open sound and bigger headroom.

The Octonaut Hyperdrive delivers semi-transparent overdrive tones and expressive dynamics with inspiring richness – that, and it puts guitarists in the Klon church at a fraction of the cost. – ***Oscar Jordan***

MODS MADE EASY

The Reddick Voyager CS

Exploring creative designs at his shop in Georgia, luthier Ian Reddick aimed to solve a common problem – how to cover a range of tones on a gig without lugging a small army of guitars. His solution is the Voyager, a modular and highly customizable guitar that enables a player to swap out pickups in seconds.

And when we say "seconds" we mean, like, three. In Reddick's hot-swap design, each pickup set is in a 6x4" wooden box that fits into a cavity behind the strings; pull the existing module from the back using the thumb hole, and snap a new one in place.

Price: $2,399 (with one Duncan humbucker module and one control module)
www.reddickguitars.com

Unlike prior concepts stretching back to Ampeg's acrylic Dan Armstrong in 1969, Reddick's design focuses on the quick-change; no tools are required and you don't even have to take your guitar from around your neck. Plus, you're not limited in the selection of pickups. Seymour Duncans are standard, but Reddick will customize a module with most any pickups. Control panels are modular, as well, with Les Paul and Strat configurations and three-way and five-way blade switches.

Reddick is committed to a steampunk-meets-artisan vibe for the Voyager CS. The compact, semi-hollow mahogany body with flame-maple top and Aqua finish on our tester was customized with a Duesenberg vibrato (hardtail is stock). Brushed-aluminum controls contrasted tastefully with the wood pickguard and granadillo fretboard with compound radius and offset markers. The 22-fret neck was maple with a unique headstock that positioned the G-string tuner at the tip.

We were supplied with two modules – one with Fender Noiseless single-coils, another with Fralin humbuckers. Played clean, low frequencies from the Fralins were a bit muted, leading us to wonder whether some resonance was lost given the three-part body. But the guitar has good sustain, and the more-driven tones characteristic of each pickup set were delivered faithfully.

With its great woodwork and an inventive modular design, the Voyager will take you through a wide-ranging gig on just one guitar. *– Rich Maloof*

GEAR UP

GIBSON RICHIE FAULKNER FLYING V CUSTOM

The Gibson Richie Faulkner Flying V Custom has a one-piece mahogany body with a full-face pickguard, multi-ply binding, mahogany neck with custom profile, ebony fretboard with a mother-of-pearl falcon inlay at the 12th fret, Floyd Rose vibrato, and Faulkner's signature EMG pickup set. Controls are a pickup selector and single Volume. It's finished in Pelham Blue.

EVH MIJ SIGNATURE WOLFGANG

The EVH MIJ Signature Wolfgang has a custom-wound Alnico II humbucker in the bridge and custom Alnico III humbucker at the neck. Its low-friction Volume knob creates even tapering. Other features include a kill switch, EVH-branded Floyd Rose bridge with locking tailpiece and fine-tuners, and an EVH D-Tuna. It's offered in Ivory and Stealth finishes.

FRAMEWORKS ELITE RACKS

Frameworks' Elite Series Guitar Racks are offered in three- and and five-space options, configurable to fit instruments or a combination of guitars and cases, with cable-hanger hooks.

They're made from 1" plywood with woodgrain surfaces and available in black, driftwood grey, dark walnut brown, and natural maple matte finishes.

Got something new and cool? Let us know at www.VintageGuitar.com/Gearin-Up-Submission

BACKLINE STAR

The Category 5 TBR-35 2x10

Don Ritter started Category 5 Amplification designing amps for blues players before expanding to other genres while holding to the philosophy that touring pros – *not* builders – should determine the sound and functionality of an amp. With early admirers like Tab Benoit, Jimmy Thackery, and Joe Bonamassa, word spread to artists such as Billy Gibbons, Samantha Fish, Ally Venable, and Luther Dickinson.

Price: $3,100
www.category5amps.com

Category 5's new TBR-35 2x10 uses a tweed-Bassman-style circuit with a three-knob reverb and power scaling. Designed for the club or studio, its 35 watts of output provide plenty of volume for larger venues. The power section holds two Tung-Sol 5881 tubes, the preamp a 12AX7 and 12AY7. Controls include Power, Dwell, Tone, Reverb, Presence, Bass, Treble, and Vol. Bright and Vol. Normal. Inputs are Hi and Lo and an effects Loop. Behind the grillecloth are an Eminence Lil' Buddy and a Legend 1028k. Styling is clean and gorgeous.

Using a Strat and Les Paul as test subjects, the TBR-35 delivered *thickness*; single notes sound huge with an earthy reverb cherry on top. Internally bridged channels – traditionally accessed with four inputs – have been reduced to a player-friendly High and Low.

The amp is a plug-straight-in dream. The Power knob controls output and scaling to adjust to stage volume without loss of tone. It's loud, lush, and rugged – but compliant. The three-knob reverb is wired to the input jack as if it were outboard. Tones are upscale, complex, and addictive. Tweaking uncovers every Bassman tone imaginable.

Category 5 amps key on gutsy tones, performance-friendly features, and a chassis built to handle strenuous touring. The price of the TBR-35 speaks to all of those points, but its tone and functionality are unbeatable for its size.

– Oscar Jordan

VG APPROVED GEAR

Price: $119.95
www.fishman.com

ACOUSTIC LOOPER

The Fishman Broken Record

Part of Fishman's line of AFX Mini Acoustic pedals, the Broken Record is a looper/sampler for players who like to keep it simple. Capable of six minutes of audio recording, it also offers effortless overdubbing.

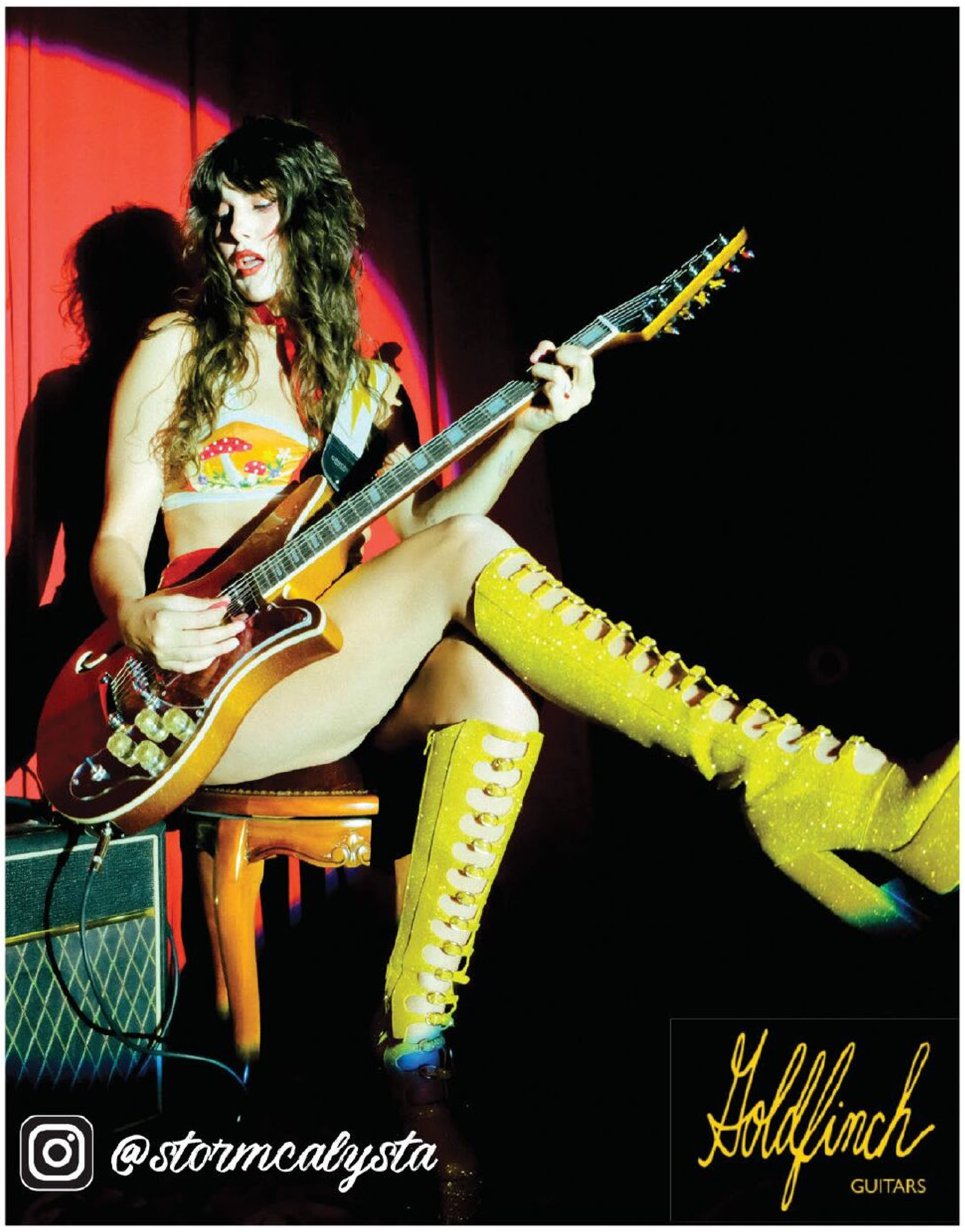
Operation couldn't be easier; start by setting the toggle to Looper, step on the footswitch to turn the LED from green to red (Record mode), cut your guitar phrase, then click again when finished. Click again to activate a yellow LED and record an overdub. Step again and you're *done* – you've just recorded a two-track loop. Other moves lets you re-record or erase loops with supreme ease. A Level knob controls the loop's volume.

Sampler mode is used to record a non-repeated audio phrase.

In back is a USB-C jack for transferring high-resolution audio to and from a computer via Fishman's AFX Phrasetransfer app. You can choose true-bypass or buffered, as well as a unique audio-path feature that lets you devise two distinct signals using TRS cables.

In all, the Broken Record is a fun, easy looper for acoustic players, but also works for electric guitar, bass, keys, and more. For anyone who has avoided looping because it seems difficult, the Broken Record stands ready to prove otherwise.

– Pete Prown VG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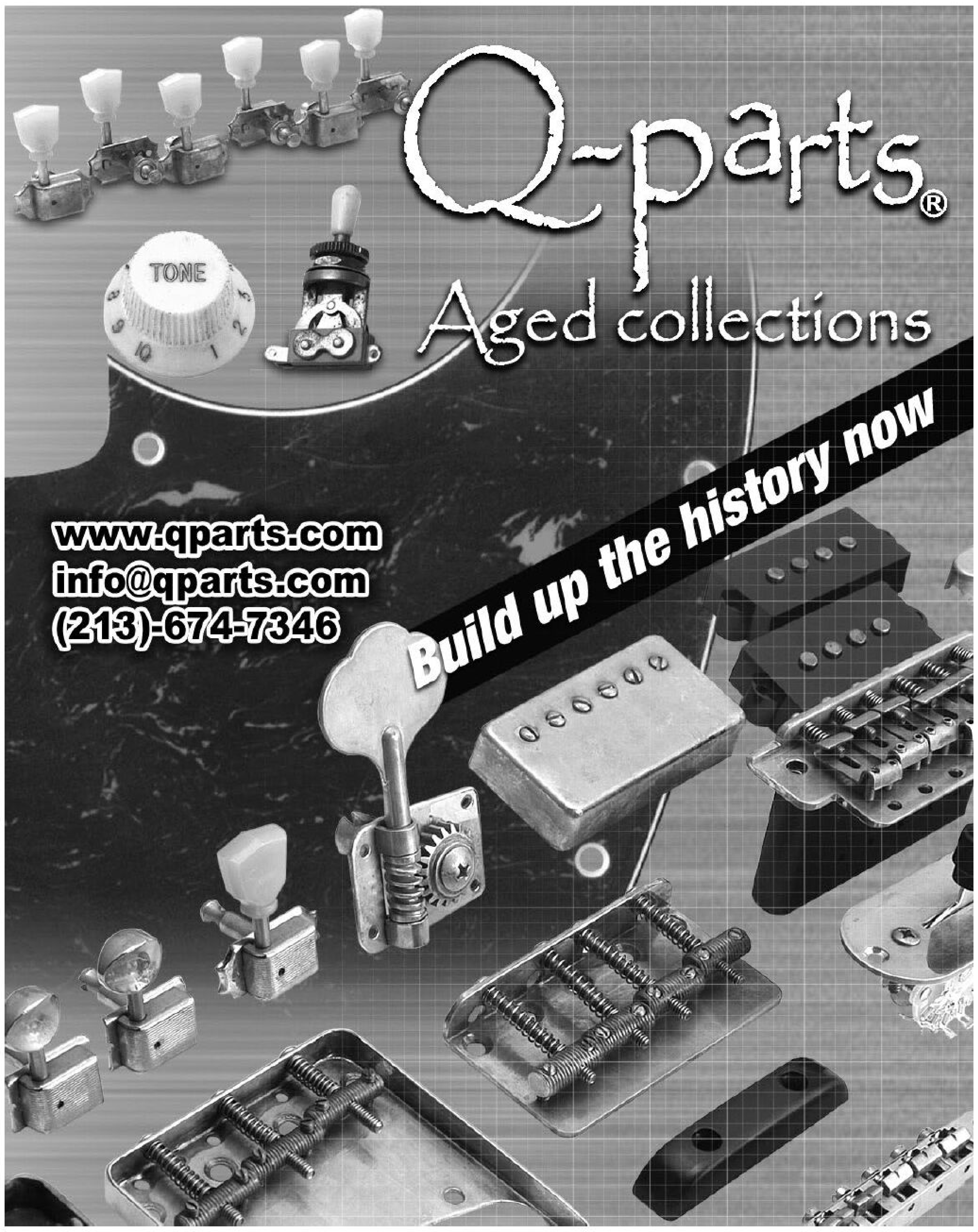
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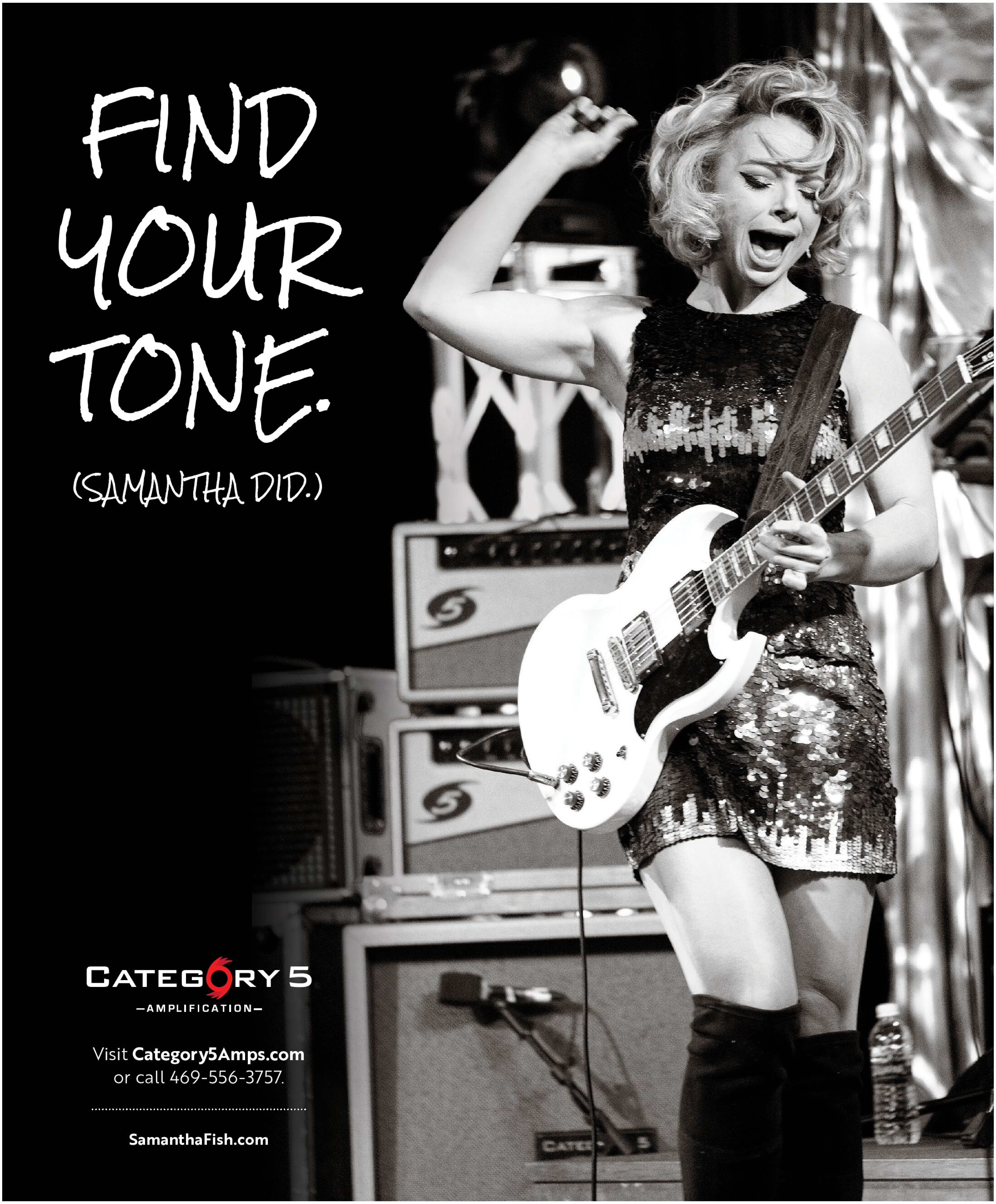
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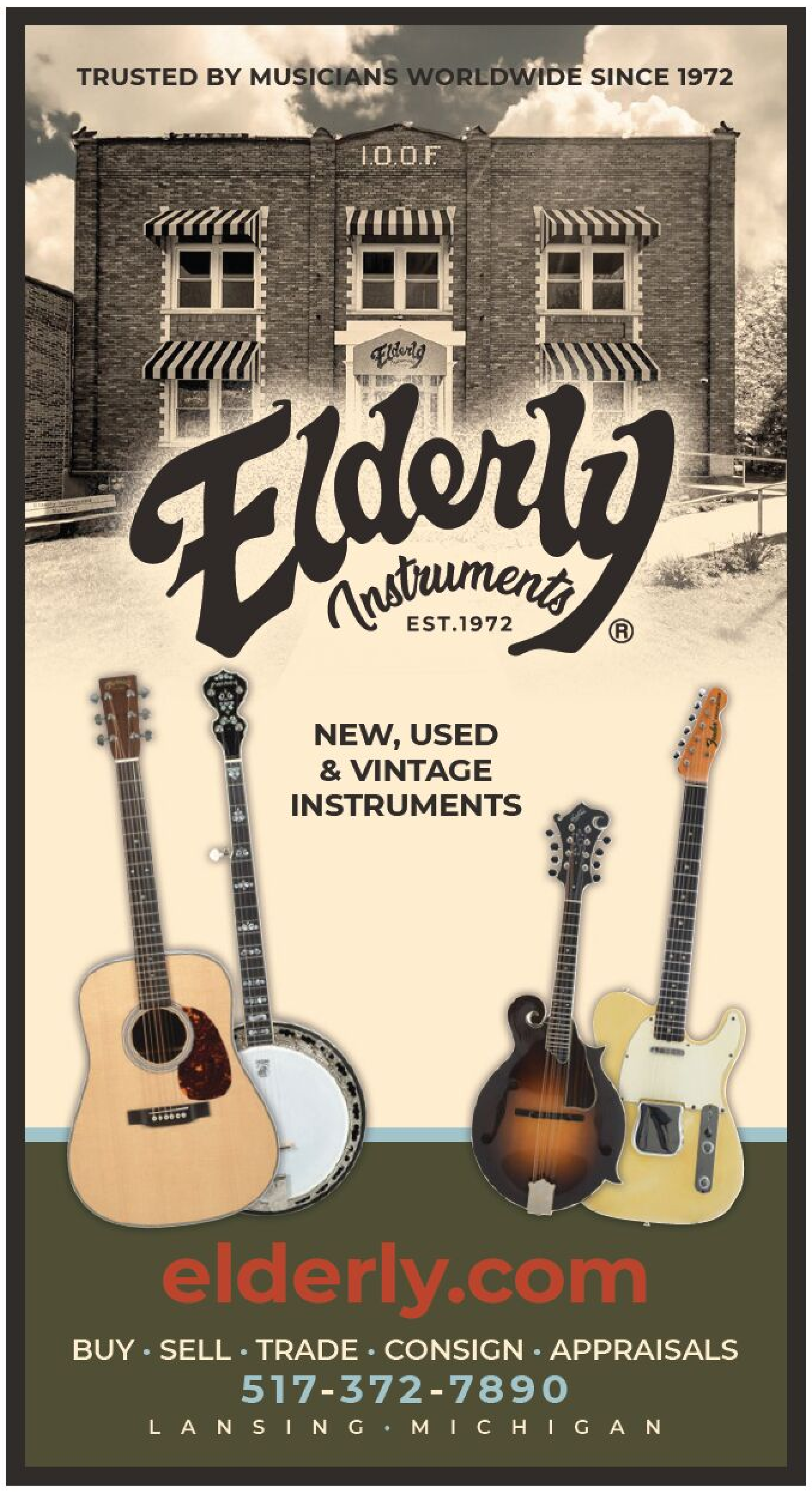
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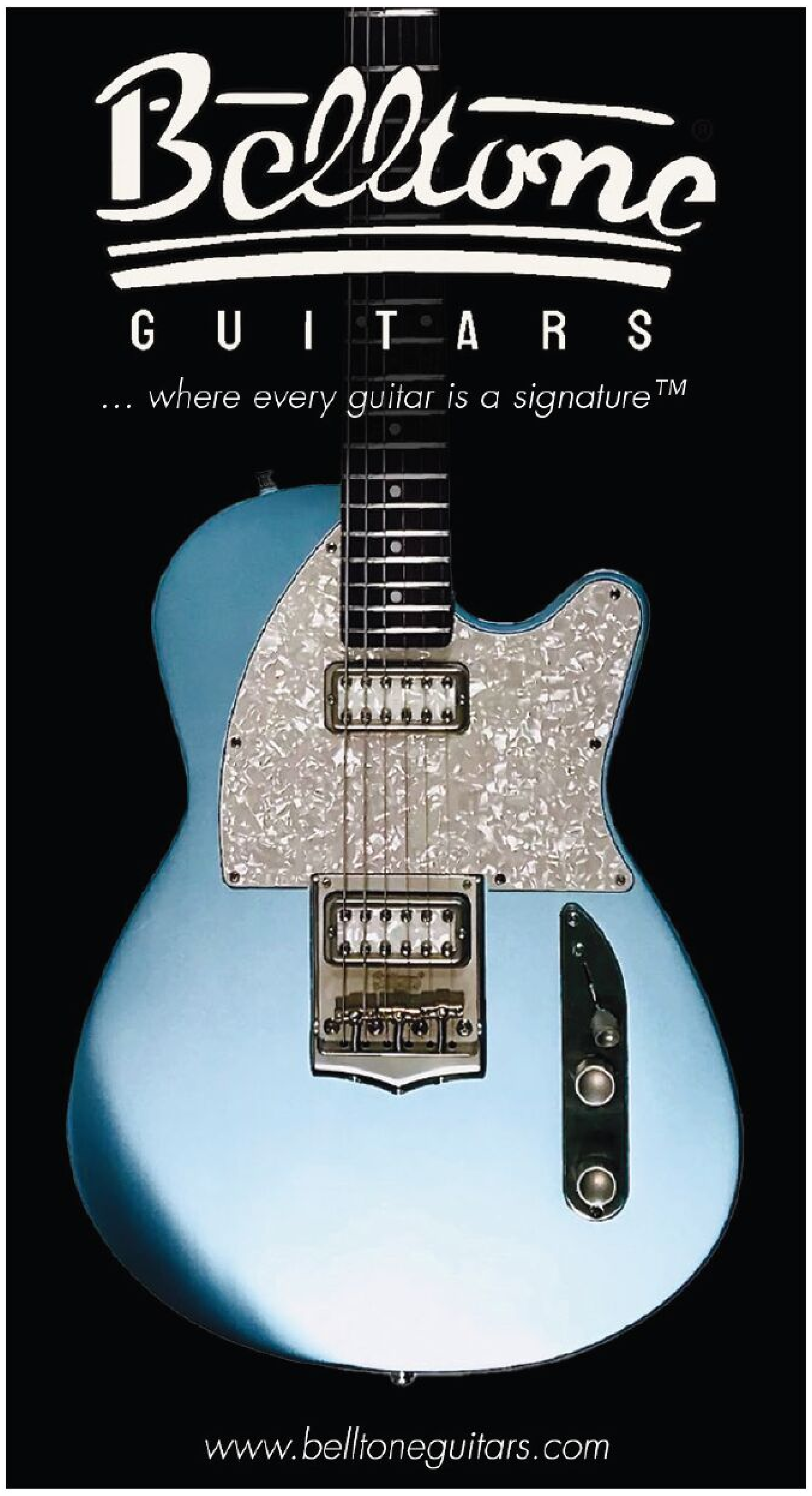
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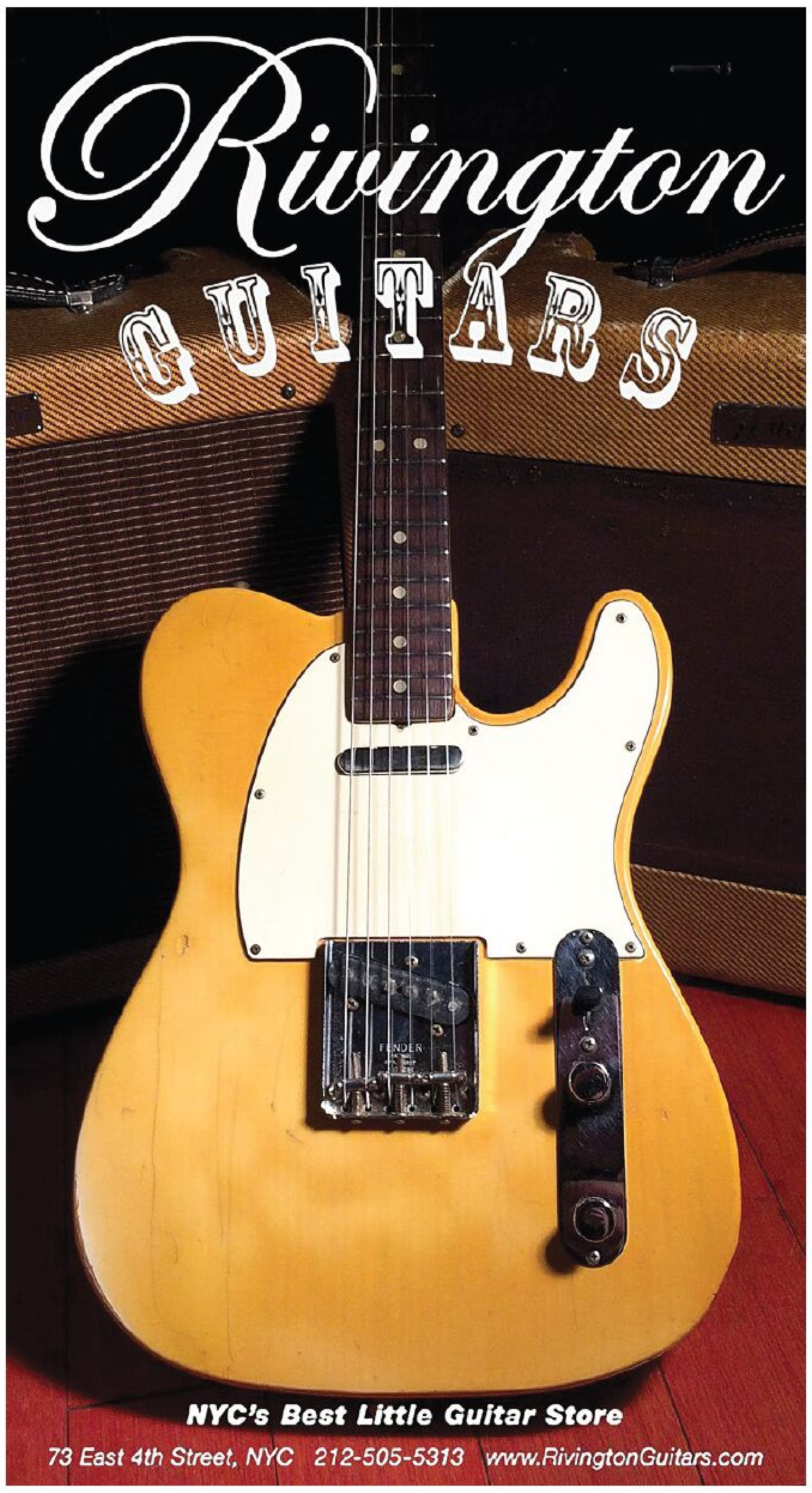
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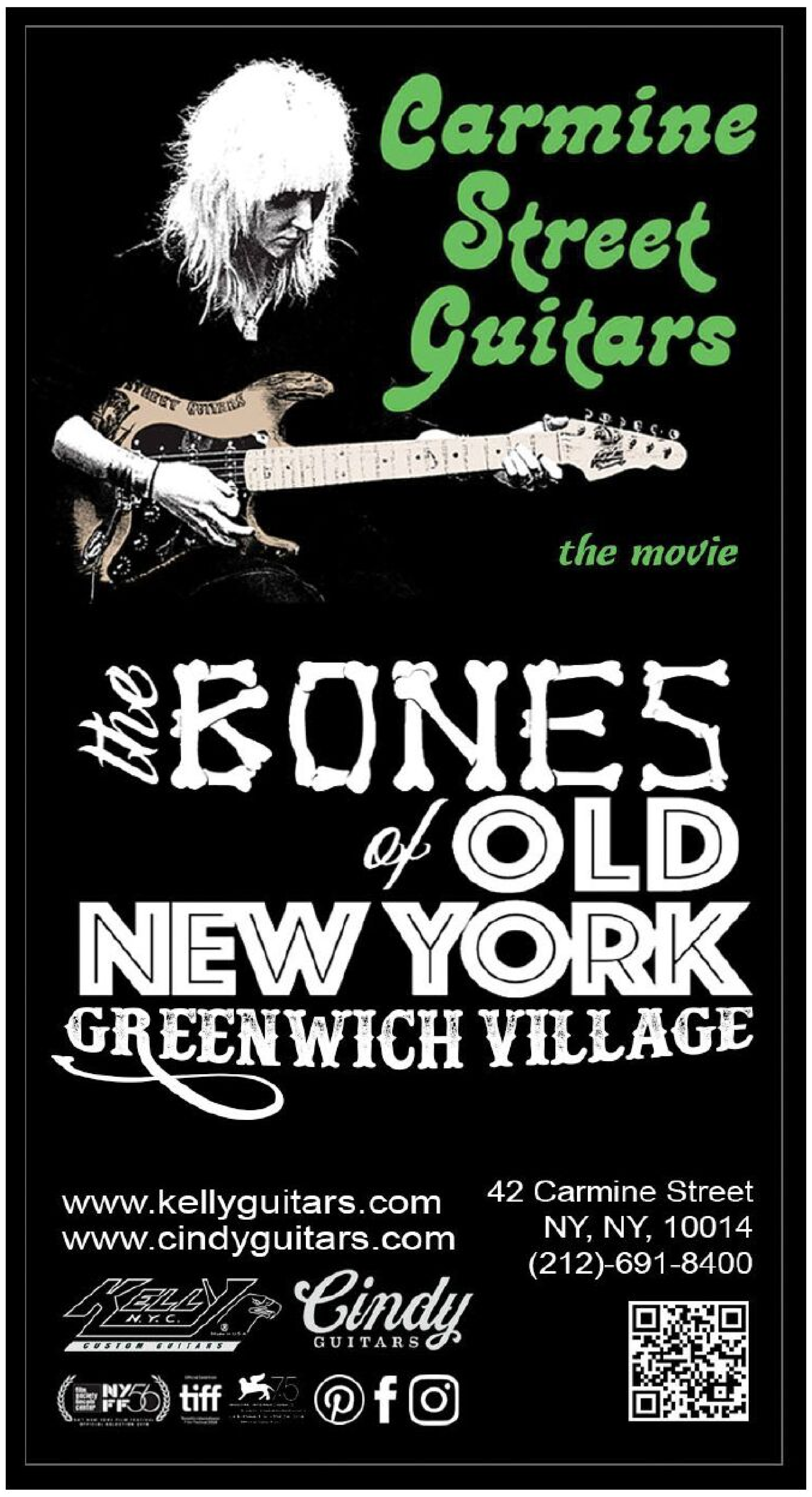

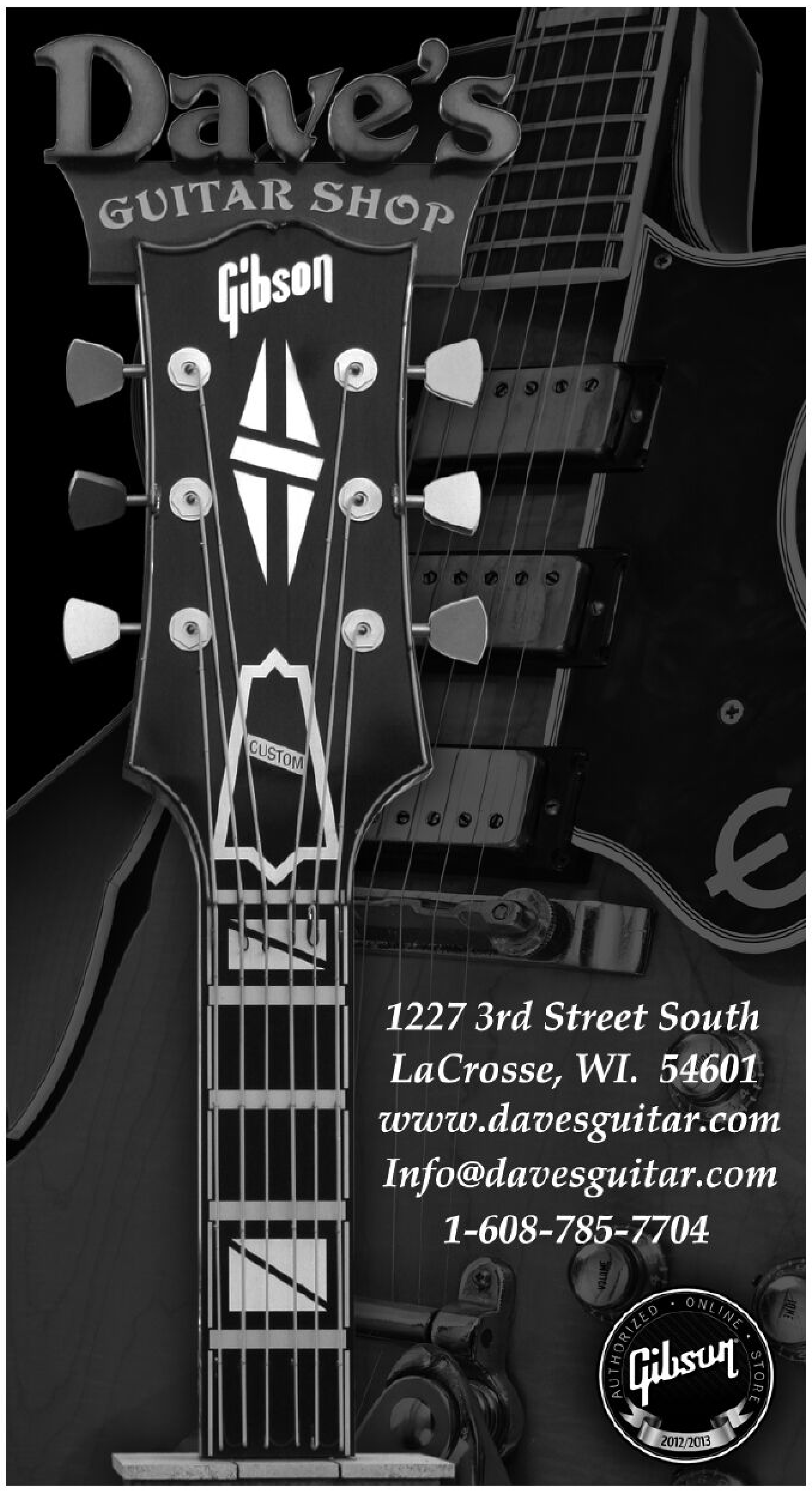

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01 The favorites from Doug B.'s collection include this (top, from left) National Style 1, National Triolian, Martin 000-18MC, 000-28VS, Gibson J-185 Original, L-00 Vintage, L-1 Blues Tribute, and J-45 Standard. Along the bottom are a Fender American Pro II Tele, AP II Strat, Rickenbacker 330, Gretsch G6120TG Nashville, Gibson SG Standard '61, and a Les Paul Standard '50s.

02 John Scirica caught his Suhr and Fender Ultra Lux Strat cuddling in a chair at his studio. "They're incredible guitars and bring me so much joy in retirement," he said.

03 Cliff Lueck's Pfretzschner aluminum bass stands out among his collection of more than 200 instruments.

04 Sean Munsey has been a VG subscriber since 2004 and the Fenders in his collection include this '66 Jazzmaster, early-'70s Jaguar his dad bought new, '76 Mustang, and an early American Standard Strat hardtail. The amps are an '82 Champ II and Super Champ, along with a '68 Bassman.

05 Jon Way is a longtime reader with a longtime appreciation for '80s Ibanez Roadstars. From front to back, here are his '83 RS205, two '86 RG140s, '85 RS205w, '83 RG135, '80 Roadster RS300, 86' RG140, and an 85' RS135.

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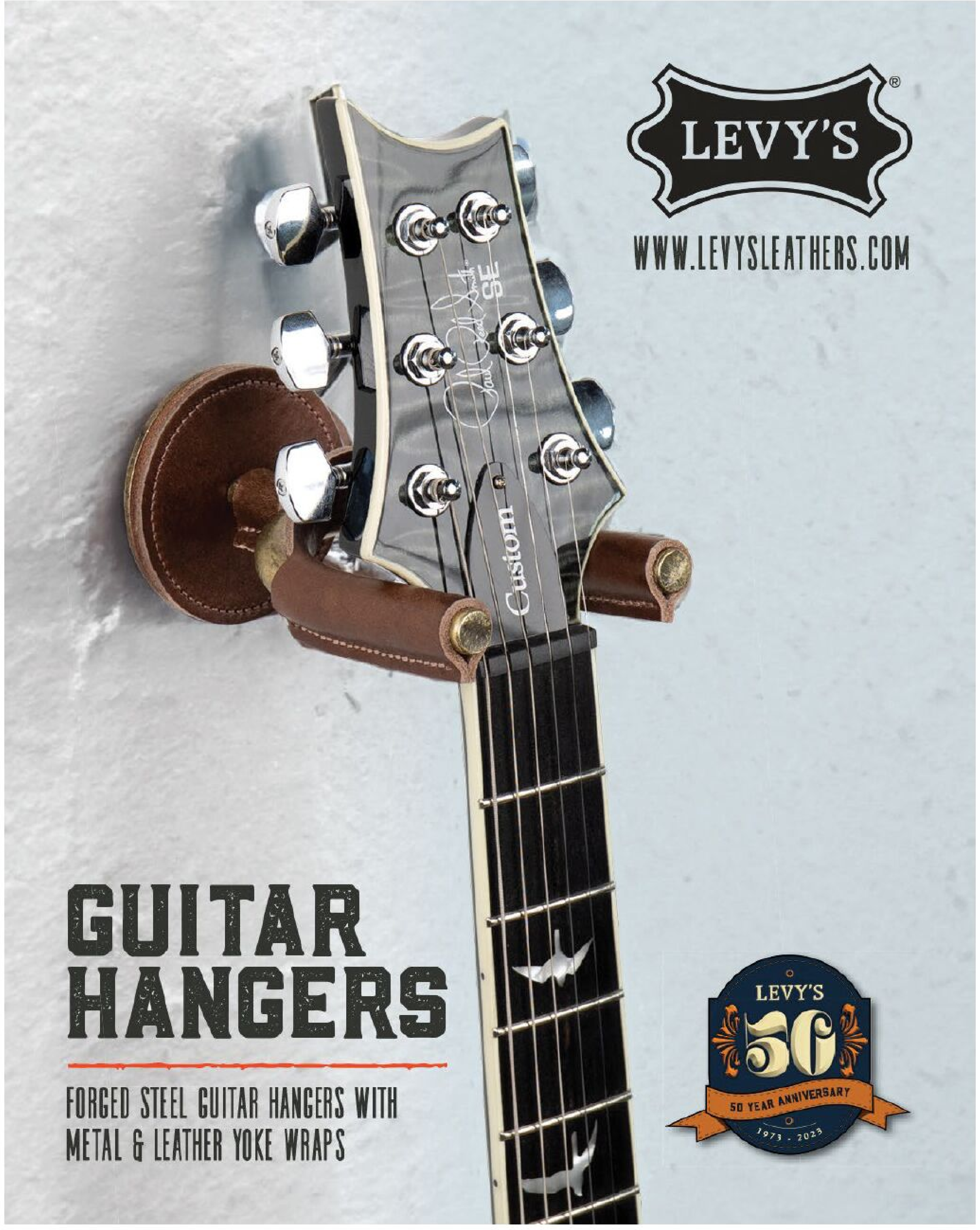

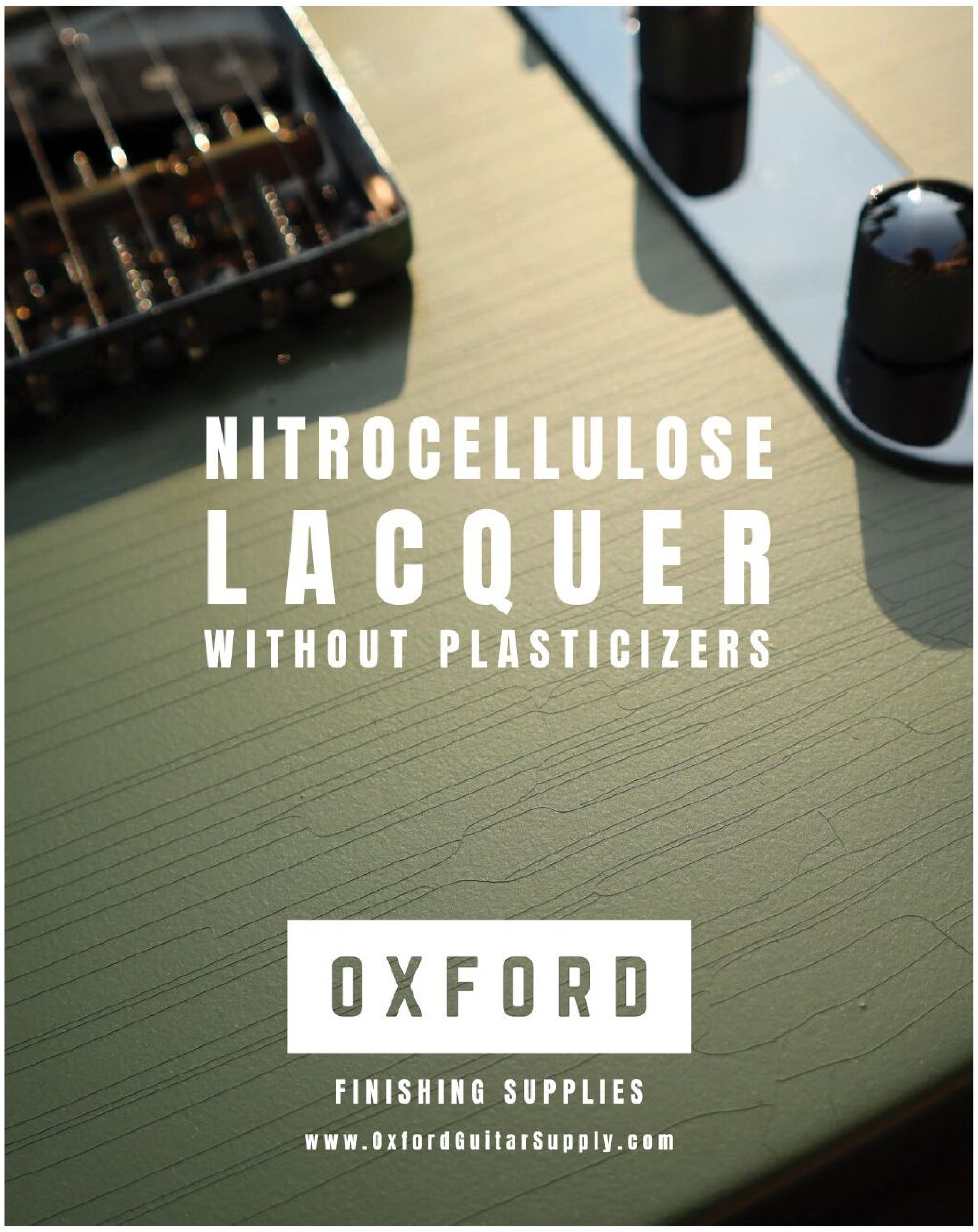

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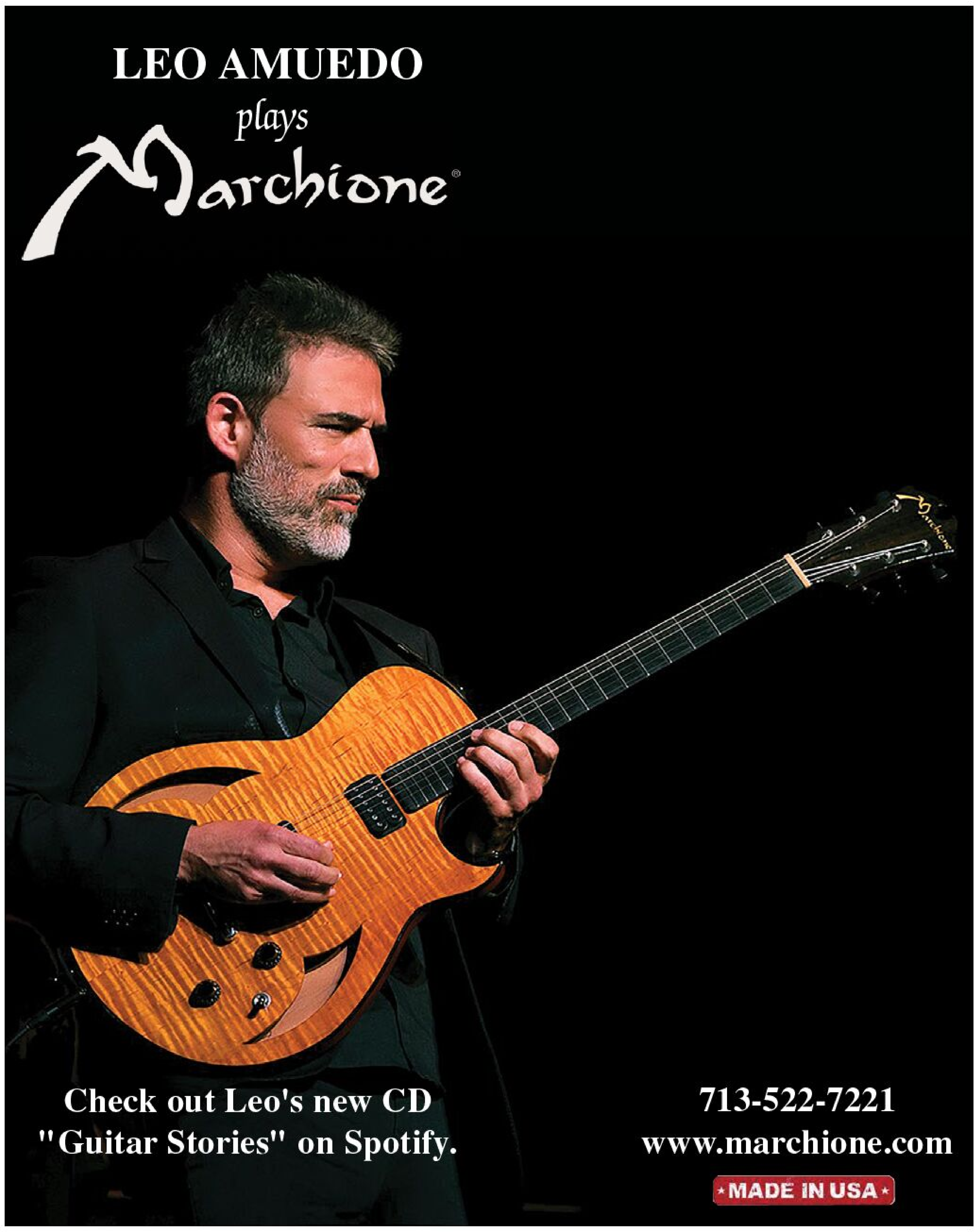

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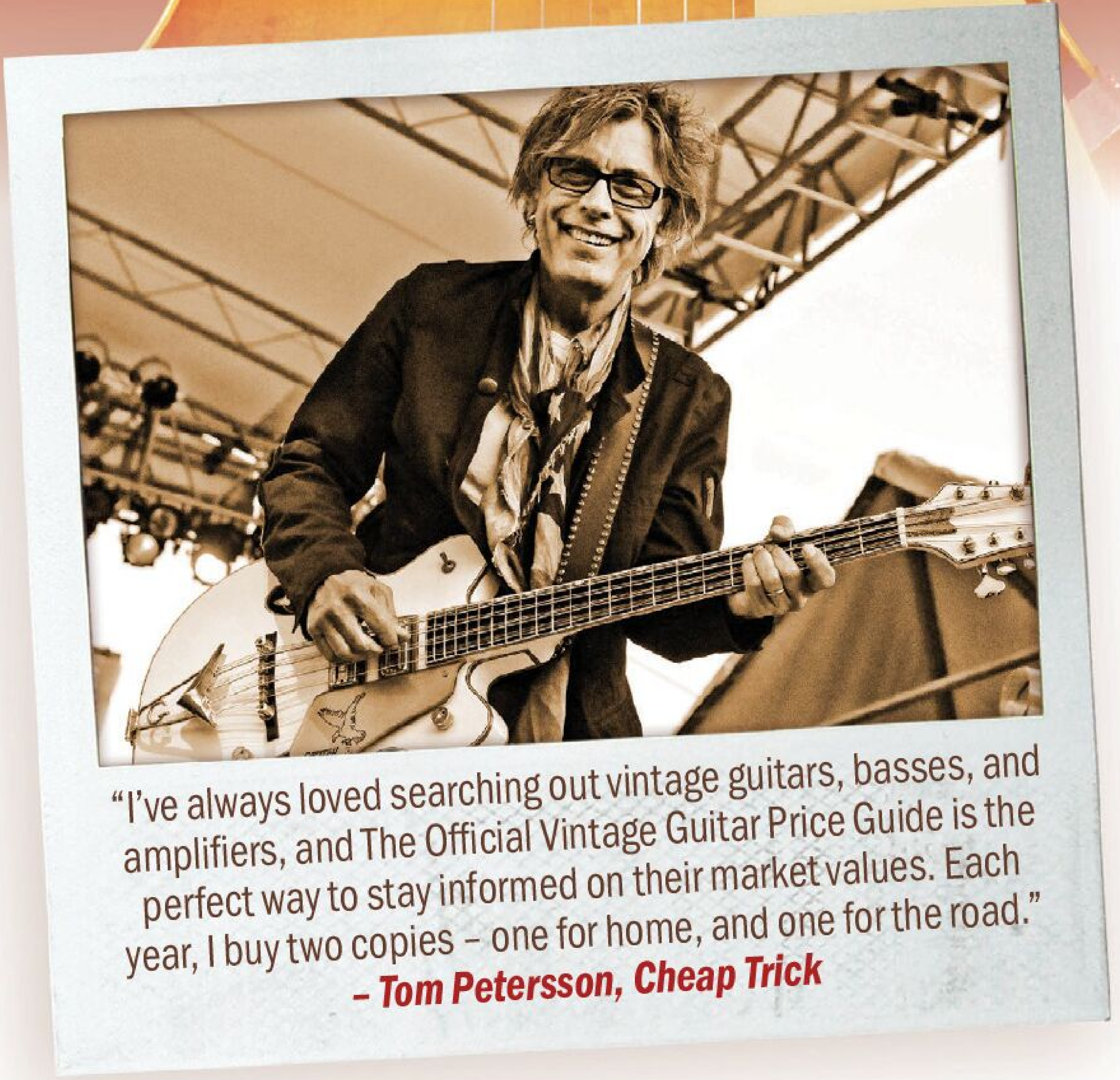

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